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065 December 2012

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- Dishonored
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PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 65 (December 2012)

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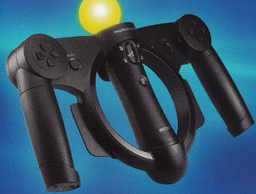

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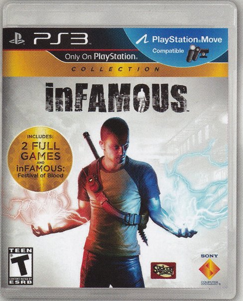
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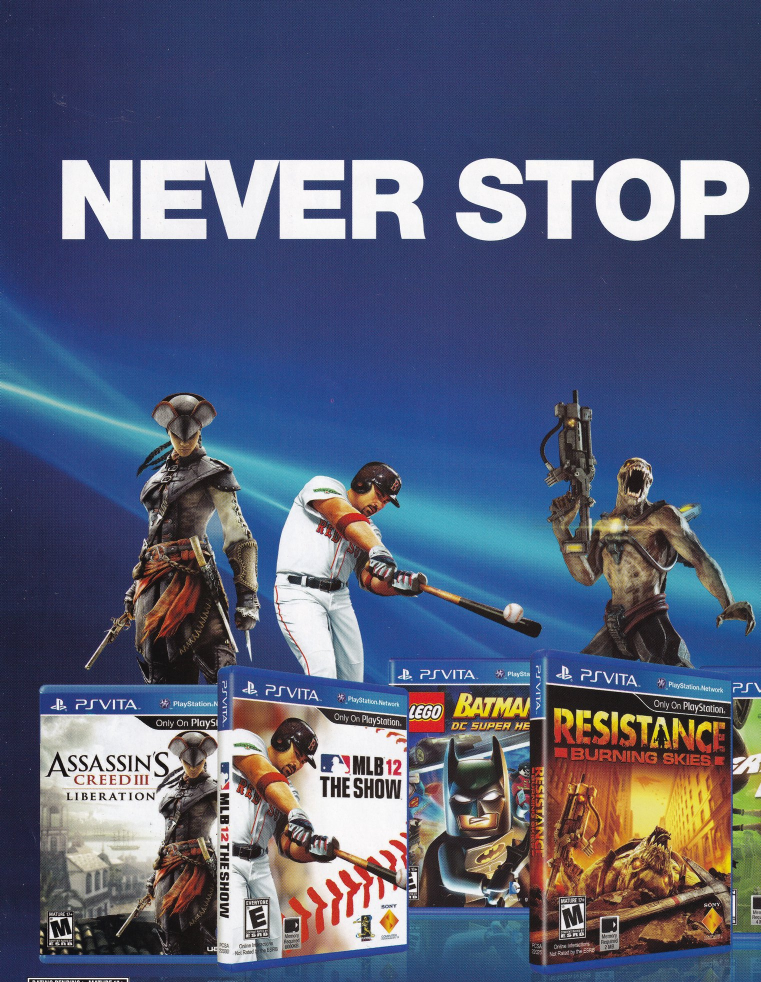
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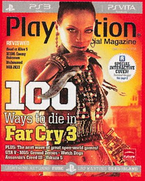
PlayStation®
The Official Magazine
DECEMBER 2012

COVER FEATURE

50 OPEN-WORLD GAMES

We love games that let us explore entire worlds. It lets us feel more... free. Join us as we venture into PS3's next wave of open-world titles.

ON THE COVER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100
Ways to die in
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GTA V · MGS: Ground Zeroes · Watch Dogs
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LIGHTNING RETURNS FUSE LBP KARTING DEAD ISLAND

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60 100 WAYS TO DIE

Dying in games sucks, unless we're trying to show off all the cool ways to die in *Far Cry 3*.

74 DISHONORED

Dishonored is an unforgiving mistress. A beautiful, deadly, unforgiving mistress.

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Dying can be fun. Trust us...to kill you!

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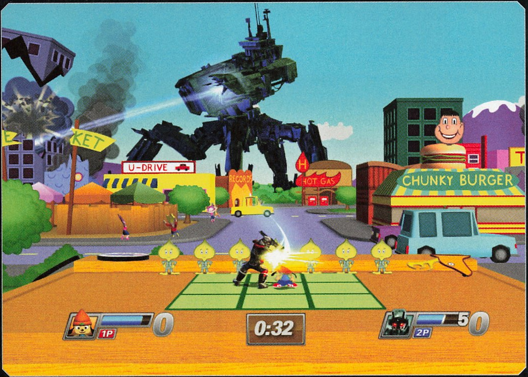

24 **PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS: BATTLE ROYALE**
When we say watching a Big Daddy, Nathan Drake, PaRappa the Rapper, and Kratos beat the snot out of each other is a dream of ours, we are being as sincere as possible.

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The Sandbox of Time

Childhood days become my digital playgrounds

One of my favorite activities as a kid was exploring. I'd spend many a day "adventuring" across the countryside, occupying dilapidated buildings, finding just the right stick to serve as a trusty sword, and living off the land (my apologies to the local farmers for *ahem* partaking in the fruits of their labor). All the while, I'd longingly eye a mountain and its forest in the distance, knowing that it was just a bit too far for away for me to reach and still make it home before dark.

Now, as an adult, I often find myself mimicking my childhood behaviors when playing my favorite videogames—albeit with a bit more flair and style...and better weaponry. To me, there's nothing better than exploring every nook and cranny of an open-world game, discovering all its secrets, and perhaps best of all: amusing myself in any way I please and can imagine. It's the reason why I've got a good 250-plus hours invested in *Just Cause 2* and why I lament that I don't have enough time to do the same with *Saints Row: The Third* and *Sleeping Dogs*.

But with *Assassin's Creed III* set to hit this holiday season, *Grand Theft Auto* readying its next entry, *Metal Gear Solid* changing its traditionally linear format for *Ground Zeroes*, and even more sandbox games on the way—we decided it was high time PTOM spotlighted the most liberating game genre of all. We even experiment with what's possible in an open world (or perhaps, not possible—but definitely should be tried) in our "100 Ways to Die in Far Cry 3" feature.

Yup, with all these great titles on the way, I just hope that tantalizing mountain from my youth isn't simply being replaced by a mountain of games that I no longer have the time to play. Sometimes, growing up sucks.

Roger Burchill
Editor in Chief
twitter.com/RogerPTOM

Dan Fitzpatrick
Art Director
twitter.com/danfpatrick

When we asked Dan Fitzpatrick what he was called back in his MMA days, the "Fishbowl" directed us to an MMA name generator and the theme of this issues' bios was discovered.

Scott Butterworth
Senior Editor
twitter.com/ScottPTOM

According to the random generator, Scott's MMA name is "Iron Hands" Butterworth. We're not sure how believable that name is. Scott has very delicate hands—even for a writer.

Mikel Reparaz
Executive Editor
twitter.com/Wikiparaz

Mikel is now to be forever referred to as "Onion" Reparaz. We worship at the altar of the generator and must do as it says. Sorry, Mikel. You're all about layers now.

Anne Lewis
Assistant Editor
twitter.com/BDRAnneLewis

Anne "I Punch Jerks" Lewis is perhaps the most accurate name the generator provided. She does, indeed, punch jerks. Her rap sheet is just littered with jerk-punching.

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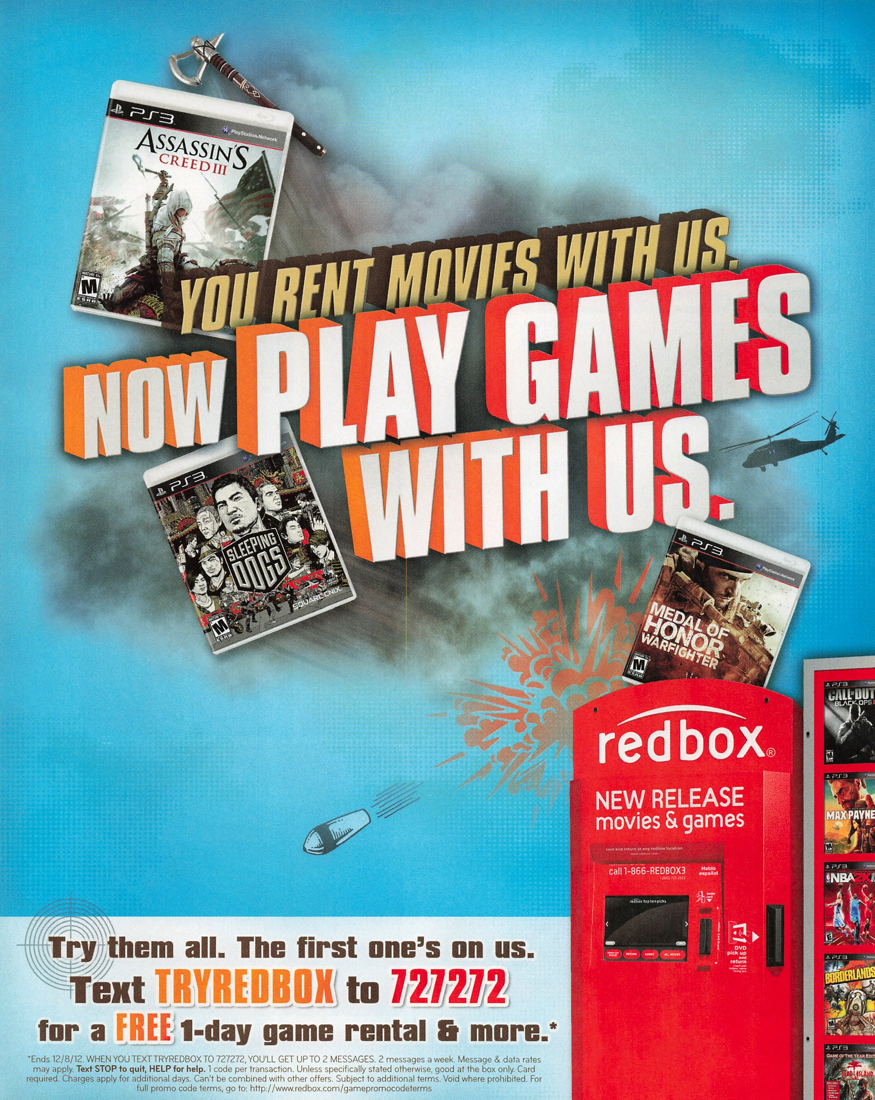
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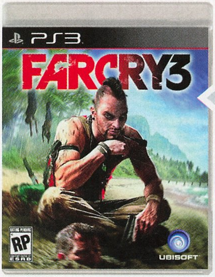
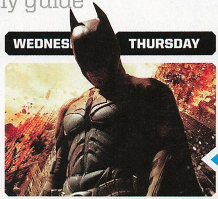


DEC 04

Island of Insanity
We have it on good authority that there are at least 100 ways to die in *Far Cry 3*. So, y'know, check it out for yourself today.

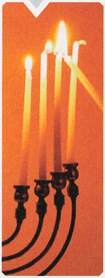


07

Rise
When Gotham is ashes, then you have our permission... To totally buy *The Dark Knight Rises* in Blu-ray for your favorite magazine editors.

08

12/8 - 12/16
Hanukkah
Sure, we can be jealous that those who celebrate Hanukkah get eight nights while we only get one, or we can... No. We're just jealous.



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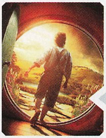
National Noodle Ring Day
Apparently, we just celebrate anything now. Is this day seriously about noodles in the shape of rings? Didn't we outgrow SpaghettiOs?



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There and Back Again
We've been waiting for *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* for years and now we get to spend four days watching it. We're pretty sure that's how long it is.

18

Holmes Again, Holmes Again
Katie Holmes, we were sad when Maggie Gyllenhaal replaced you in *The Dark Knight*, but so happy when you divorced Tom Cruise. Happy birthday.

21

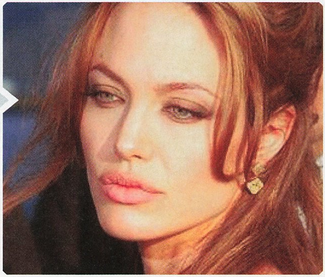
End of the World
We don't really cotton to all that end-of-the-world noise, but we want to be safe. How much would building a small house on the moon cost?

25

Christmas
This year we're celebrating Christmas by going to see *Django Unchained* alone. Our families will wonder where we are and we'll throw our cell phones into the popcorn maker.

26

12/26 - 1/1
Kwanzaa
You know who celebrates Kwanzaa? Angelina Jolie. Then again, she celebrates everything...and she's rich and beautiful, which is just not fair.



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New Year's Eve
2012 is over. The world probably didn't end, which is a pretty good reason to celebrate. 2013 can suck it because we have mastered life and death.

Katie Holmes © iStockphoto.com/EdStock. Angelina Jolie by Georges Biard. Christmas girl © iStockphoto.com/proxyminder Release dates are subject to change by the publishers.

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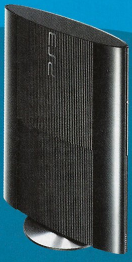
Press this button and the sliding door snaps open, but closing it requires manually sliding the door back.

1

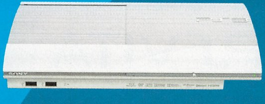
Leaner and Meaner

PS3 gets into fighting form for the holiday season

Standsome
Available: Now
Price: $15
Those who prefer to vertically orient their PS3 must purchase the stand accessory. While it's an additional cost, it appears to be a quality metal piece that screws onto the PS3's base.



Classic White
A white color option will be available for the new PS3 in November, but only in Japan. Sony does promise that white PS3s will be available in other territories at a later unspecified date.



Cyborg Revenge
Mega Man creator and Team Ninja join up for *Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z.*
▶▶Page 10

Get Serious
Insomniac's *Overstrike* re-emerges as the gritty *Fuse.*
▶▶Page 14

Curriculum Vita
We grade Vita's performance over its first six months.
▶▶Page 17

PlayStation Vita
Standards
Advanced
Proficient
Approaching
Not Yet
Grade
Comments

TalkStation is Go
PTOM has a podcast! Here's how to get it—and our digital edition.
▶▶Page 21

The Great Debate
Are horror games still scary? Does it matter? PTOM editors discuss.
▶▶Page 22

25% Lighter! The new PS3 weighs a bit over 4.5 lbs., about three-quarters the weight of PS3 Slim.

20% Smaller! The newest version of PS3—designated the CECH-4000 series—is one-fifth trimmer than PS3 Slim, measuring in at approximately 11.5" × 2.5" × 9".

Loading Zone The new PS3's major design change is that the Blu-ray drive is now accessed via a sliding door rather than an insertion slot.

Two Models!

250GB Hard Drive
Available: Now
Price: $270

The 250GB model comes bundled with *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception – Game of the Year Edition* and a voucher for over $30 worth of *DUST 514* bonus digital content.

500GB Hard Drive
Available: October 30
Price: $300

The 500GB model offers twice as much storage capacity and will be offered in a limited edition bundle with *Assassin's Creed III.*

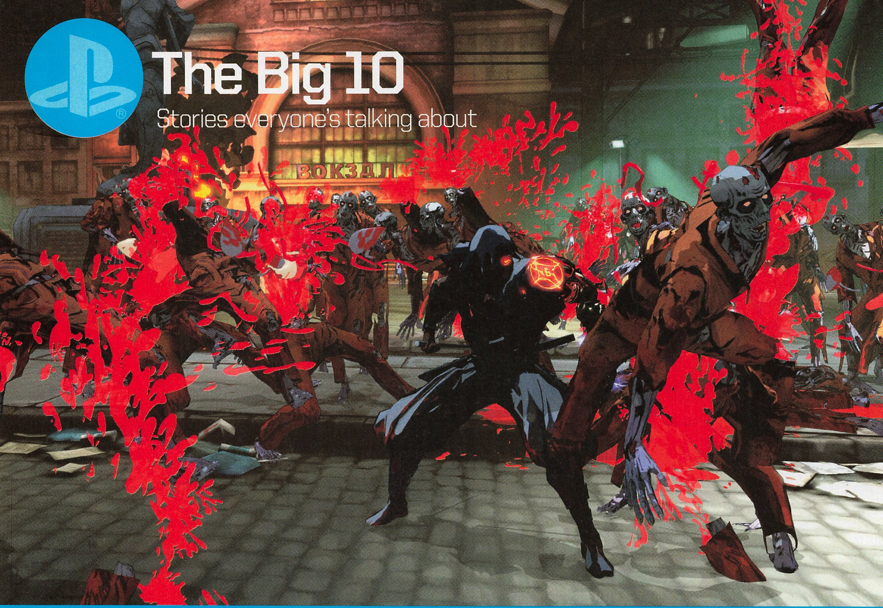
Gut Reaction

- ▲ Smaller, lighter, tidier form factor
- ▲ Larger Hard Drive capacities
- ▲ Does less complexity equal increased reliability?
- ▼ A real price drop would've been nice
- ▼ 250GB model bundled with an old, albeit great, game
- ▼ Vertical setup requires stand accessory

Something Old, Something New
We can't help thinking that the new PS3 form looks a lot like a rounded PS2. It makes us all nostalgic.

New Shades of Vita

Two new PS Vita color options—Cosmic Red and Sapphire Blue—have been announced, but they're currently confirmed only for the Japanese market. North American gamers will have to settle for either the forthcoming *Assassin's Creed III: Liberation* bundle's limited-edition Crystal White Vita or the original black for now.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

2 The Unholy Trinity

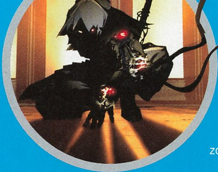
Ninjas, zombies, and cyborgs… Oh my! The only thing Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z's missing is pirates.

When great minds come together, awesomeness happens. Mega Man creator and zombie aficionado Keiji Inafune is joining forces with the boobs and blades-loving Team Ninja to create what could very possibly be the game of our dreams. Did we mention U.S. dev Spark Unlimited is also throwing down on this bad boy too? Nitty-gritty details may be scant at best, but the gloriously gory collaboration, called *Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z*, will be a hyper-violent action game that weaves zombies, ninjas, and cyborgs into one big ass-kicking tapestry of awesome. That's more than enough to quicken our pulses, but there's more.

Instead of playing as the *Ninja Gaiden* series' black-clad mainstay Ryu Hayabusa, it looks like we'll be stepping into the shoes of one of his victims, a super ticked-off undead ninja cyborg who's out for revenge.

Expect to see lots of zombie collateral damage, since the undead masses seem to walk the streets in abundance. We're intrigued to see how this new blood feud pans out and what surprise plot developments will come of it. Hunting the hunter is indeed a clever twist for the franchise.

Star talent and compelling story setup alone may be enough to turn heads, though *Yaiba's* cool comic book-style cel-shaded art direction looks pretty sharp, too. Slicing body parts off of zombie hordes while tracking down our infamous murderer certainly won't be lacking in artistic flair between the fountains of blood and the glow of neon nightlife. Expect to see this messy showdown from publisher Tecmo Koei sometime next year.



3

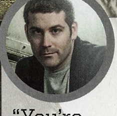
Speed Kill

Creative director Maxime Béland on Splinter Cell: Blacklist's expanded gameplay, battlefield morality, and fluid takedowns

B*lacklist* seems like another reinvention of Sam Fisher and what he does. Why did the series need a fresh start?
I wouldn't say that *Blacklist* is a fresh start for the franchise as much as it's a continuation of an evolution we started with *Conviction*. We tried to make the player, and Sam, feel like the best operative in the world, instead of being ultra-fragile and having difficulty shooting a gun and things like that. So we kind of brought our range of gameplay a bit more toward action, but we lost some of the stealth elements. Now on *Blacklist*, we're able to expand the gameplay on both sides. We've added a lot of stealth features. We've also added action features, so that hopefully it will be a game that you're able to play the way you want.

Are you going to bring back anything like *Double Agent's* moral choices in *Blacklist*?
Our reflection with morality in games is if you attach a game system or a reward system to morality, then players will not play the "true" moral choice. They will just play the player archetype they decided they wanted to be. You play *Mass Effect*, and you're like, "I'm going to be an ass" or "I'm going to be a great guy," and then you're just deciding which choice fits with the character you've already decided you were playing. You're not really reflecting on the situation, just gaming the system.

In our game, we're going to have some choices, and they're all going to be different situations that we put the player in, and then he's going to be faced with the choice to kill or not kill the person he's with. We put the player in situations that are very realistic and are very difficult, just to show that things are never black and white.

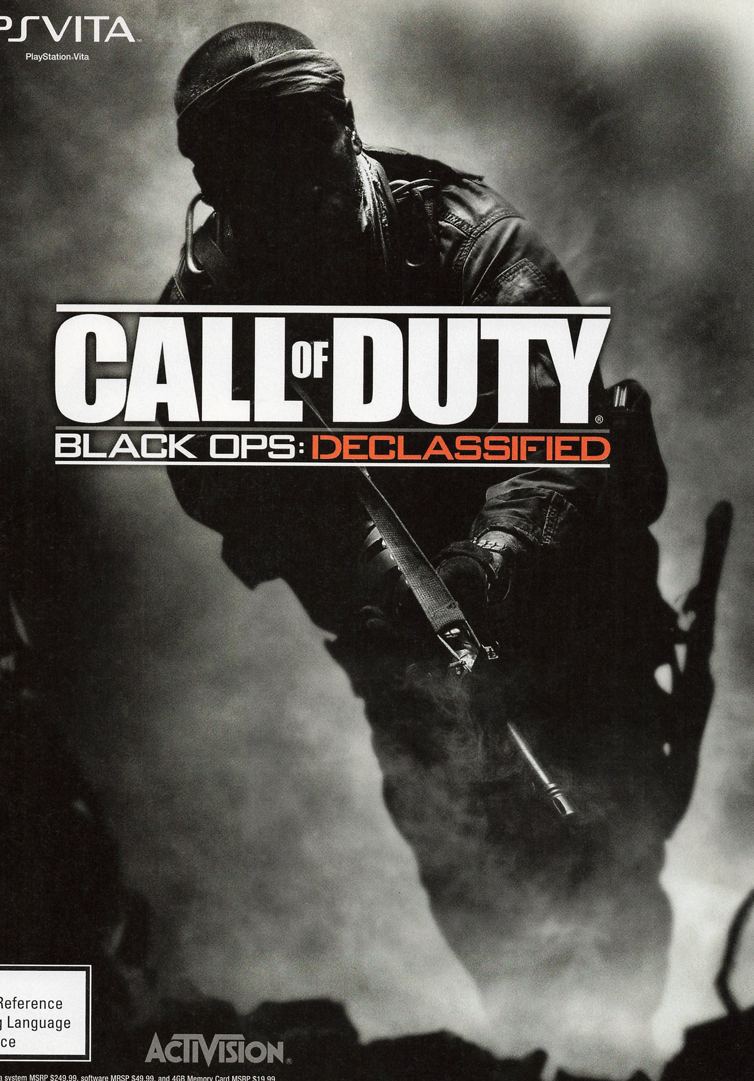


"You're not really reflecting on [morality], just gaming the system."
—Maxime Béland, Creative Director

Sam seems to have a near-constant forward momentum in *Blacklist*, which is great to watch...
Well, it's a bitch to make. The easy way to make combat in games is when you know exactly where the two characters are, and then you just play the animation that looks amazing. That's why often in games you see camera cuts. If you play *Deus Ex*, for example, every hand-to-hand kill does a camera cut, reorients the characters perfectly, and does the amazing kill. So when we started working on hand-to-hand kills in motion, and Mark and Execute in motion, it's like, "How do we do this?" Then suddenly it's not just about animation. You need a lot of code to support it. It's a bitch to do. At the same time, it's rewarding, it's fun, it's making you feel more in control, and you feel less like you're pressing a button and waiting for the game to finish its animation.

PS VITA

PlayStation Vita



MATURE 17+

M

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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Drug Reference
Strong Language
Violence

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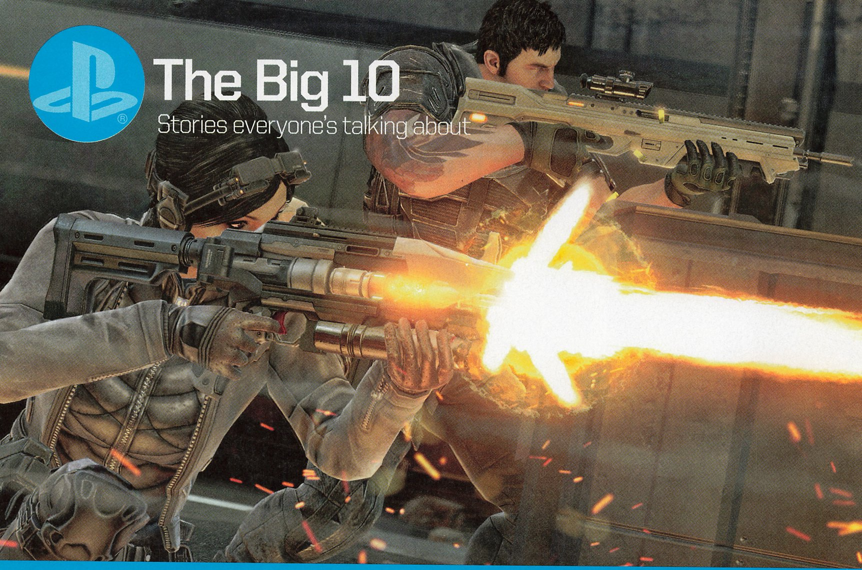


4

Fight to Ignite

Insomniac's newest project? Its MIA co-op shooter Overstrike transforms into Fuse

Like a well-armed phoenix rising from the ashes of its cartoony, stylized past, Insomniac's long-awaited shooter *Overstrike* has finally remerged as the grittier, more serious *Fuse*. Though the game's four-player cooperative focus remains unchanged, the cheeky quips and goofy antics found in the original E3 2011 trailer have vanished, leaving many fans wondering: Why the change?

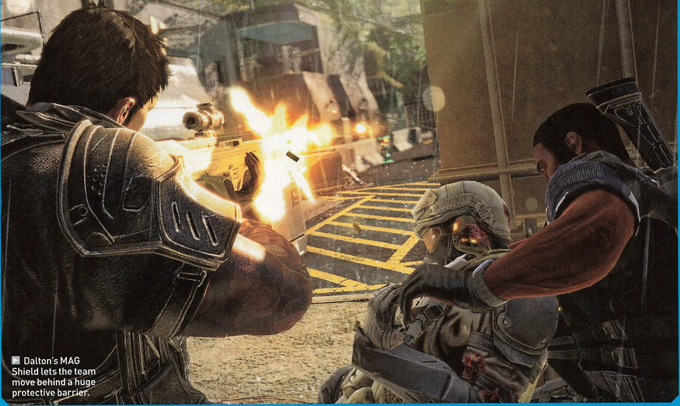
"A lot of it was driven by the weapons," explains Insomniac CEO Ted Price. "When we were working on the earlier version of the game with the highly stylized characters and the more 'comic' feel, we weren't getting the results we wanted from the combat."

According to Price, the team had to hold back to maintain the "lighthearted" tone, especially when it came to designing guns (and displaying the resulting devastation). "When we make weapons in our games, we want them to have impact. And that doesn't mean that the weapons have to be super realistic, but they have to make you feel good. When we decided to go in a more grounded direction and not worry about being a Teen-rated game, for example, we were able to do some pretty crazy stuff. And all of a sudden, things started clicking."

The key that finally helped everything fall into place? Fuse itself, a mysterious alien resource that drives both the plot and the gameplay. After discovering the substance in the early 1940s, the U.S. government began secret tests to weaponize fuse by combining it with various earthly materials. After decades of research, however, word of these experiments finally got out, leading a rogue military group called Raven to swipe the source of all fuse energy. That's when the independent Overstrike 9 team (i.e. *you*) gets called in to track it down.

Fusing Firepower

Thankfully, we'll be able to enjoy the fruits of the government's labor, arming ourselves with four fuse-fueled firearms. Each of these weapons—an incendiary crossbow, a crystalizing machine gun, a singularity-spewing

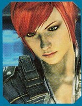


▶ Dalton's MAG Shield lets the team move behind a huge protective barrier.

Meet the Team

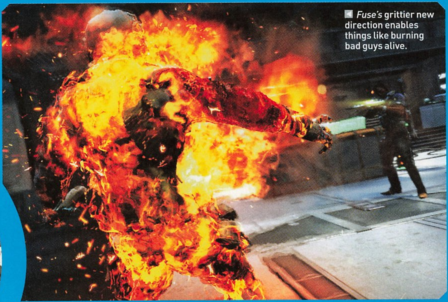
Dalton Brooks
Background: **Reformed terrorist**
Weapon: **MAG Shield**

Jacob Kimbell
Background: **Former LAPD detective**
Weapon: **Arc Shot**



Isabelle Sinclair
Background: **Hacker for hire**
Weapon: **Shattergun**

Naya Deveraux
Background: **Professional assassin**
Weapon: **Warp Rifle**



◀ *Fuse's* grittier new direction enables things like burning bad guys alive.

The team had to hold back to maintain the "lighthearted" tone, especially when it came to designing guns.

rifle, and a devastating bullet shield—is assigned to a specific playable character and roughly correlates with a style of play: ranged, defense, crowd control, and support. According to Price, this means the gameplay experience will change dramatically depending on which character we select, especially since the game also features branching upgrade trees that deepen these disparate playstyles.

While the game is clearly designed for co-op (the fastest way to gain XP, for example, is to use all four fuse weapons in tandem), players without a complete quartet will actually be able to "leap" from one character to another on the fly, since all four characters are present at all times regardless of how many actual people are playing. This means players won't necessarily be stuck with the same gun, skills, and role for the entire campaign. Whomever we select, though, we'll have plenty of cover-based third-person shootouts to enjoy on our way through the game's roughly linear campaign.

Despite *Fuse's* obvious focus on gameplay, Price reassures us that story and humor still play a significant role in the experience, even if he does consider the game's significant shift in style to be "top-level, surface discussion."

According to Price, "Until you experience what it's like [to use *Fuse's* weapons], you don't understand what the game's truly about and how far the game has come in terms of fun factor." Luckily, *Fuse's* targeted March 2013 release date means fans really won't have to wait all that long to start crushing enemies with tiny black holes.

Lightning Strikes Thrice

5

Final Fantasy XIII's protagonist unexpectedly returns for a swan song

Lightning may be in the forecast, but the *Final Fantasy* series' 25th anniversary isn't about to get rained out anytime soon. We're stoked to hear the pink-haired, gunblade-wielding protagonist of *Final Fantasy XIII* will be back for one final adventure to close out the ongoing saga, which will now span three epic installments.

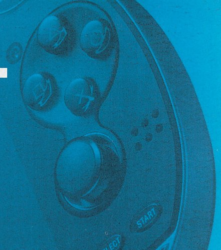
Dubbed *Lightning Returns*, this last romp takes place hundreds of years after the events of *Final Fantasy XIII-2* in a new realm called Novus Partus, an island world formed in the wake of Gran Pulse and Valhalla's merging. Trouble is brewing in the turbulent landscape, however, since the world is mysteriously set to end in 13 days unless Lightning can find a means to stop Armageddon.

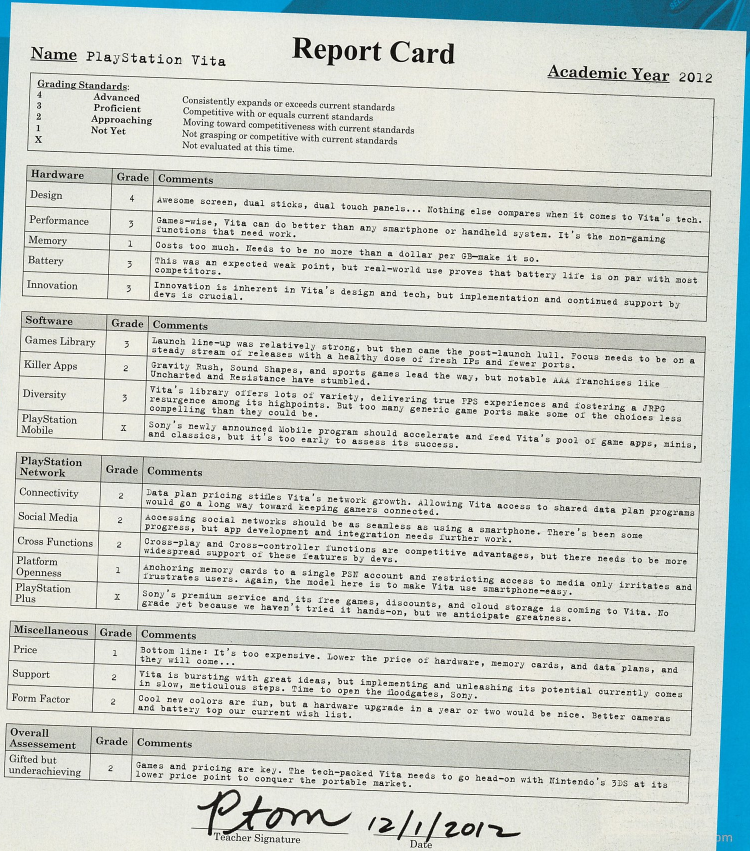
The flow of time factors heavily into *Lightning Returns*. As the clocks ticks onwards towards doomsday, the cycle of day and night change the dynamics of the game world and the behavior of its inhabitants. Some areas are only accessible during specific times of day, for example, and roaming monsters are more prevalent at nighttime, making nocturnal travel a more dangerous prospect. Certain activities speed the flow of time along too, though it's also possible to reverse time through specific actions, such as defeating enemies.

While Lightning's last hurrah to save the world will be played as a solo adventure featuring a new tale and new faces, it seems likely other characters from both previous installments will pop in to cameo before the credits roll. We can't wait until next year to see how this finale plays out.

6 Vita's Mid-Year Report Card

PTOM assesses PlayStation Vita's progress in order to unlock its true potential





Name PlayStation Vita

Report Card

Academic Year 2012

Grading Standards:

4	Advanced	Consistently expands or exceeds current standards
3	Proficient	Competitive with or equals current standards
2	Approaching	Moving toward competitiveness with current standards
1	Not Yet	Not grasping or competitive with current standards
X		Not evaluated at this time.

Hardware	Grade	Comments
Design	4	Awesome screen, dual sticks, dual touch panels... Nothing else compares when it comes to Vita's tech.
Performance	3	Games-wise, Vita can do better than any smartphone or handheld system. It's the non-gaming functions that need work.
Memory	1	Costs too much. Needs to be no more than a dollar per GB—make it so.
Battery	3	This was an expected weak point, but real-world use proves that battery life is on par with most competitors.
Innovation	3	Innovation is inherent in Vita's design and tech, but implementation and continued support by devs is crucial.

Software	Grade	Comments
Games Library	3	Launch line-up was relatively strong, but then came the post-launch lull. Focus needs to be on a steady stream of releases with a healthy dose of fresh IPs and fewer ports.
Killer Apps	2	Gravity Rush, Sound Shapes, and sports games lead the way, but notable AAA franchises like Uncharted and Resistance have stumbled.
Diversity	3	Vita's library offers lots of variety, delivering true FPS experiences and fostering a JRPG resurgence among its highpoints. But too many generic game ports make some of the choices less compelling than they could be.
PlayStation Mobile	X	Sony's newly announced Mobile program should accelerate and feed Vita's pool of game apps, minis, and classics, but it's too early to assess its success.

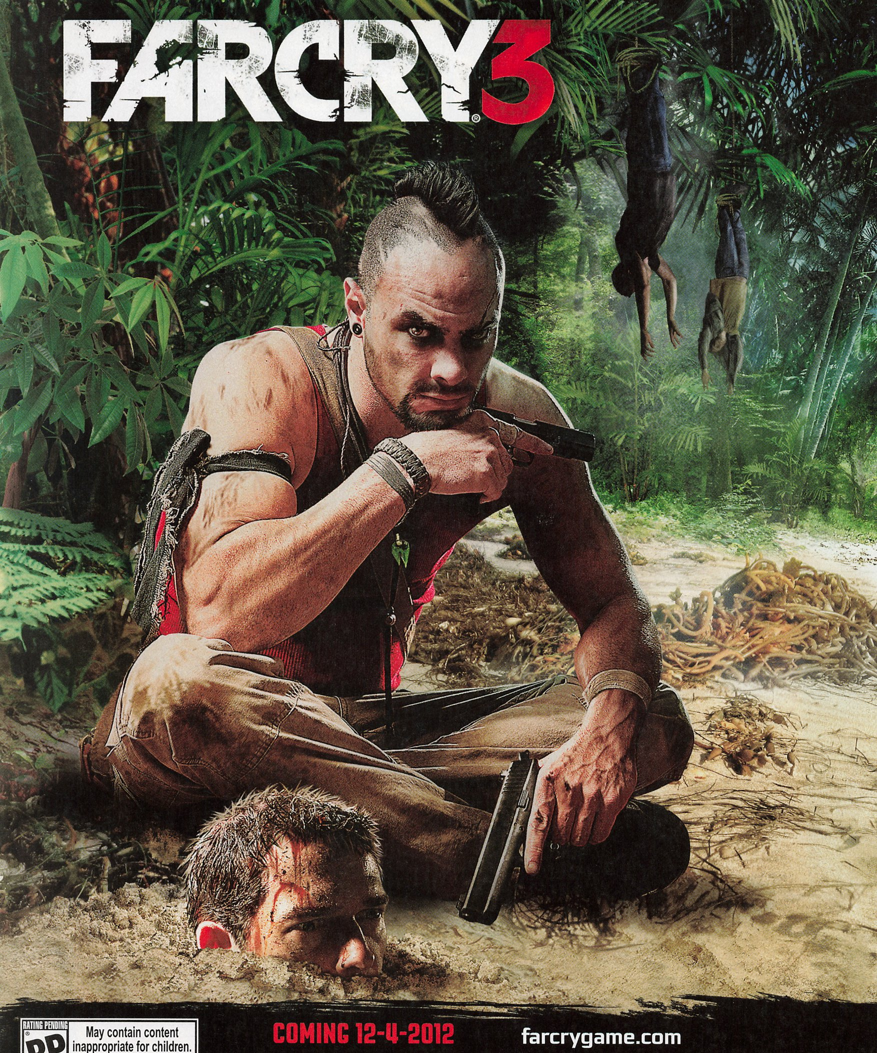
PlayStation Network	Grade	Comments
Connectivity	2	Data plan pricing stifles Vita's network growth. Allowing Vita access to shared data plan programs would go a long way toward keeping gamers connected.
Social Media	2	Accessing social networks should be as seamless as using a smartphone. There's been some progress, but app development and integration needs further work.
Cross Functions	2	Cross-play and Cross-controller functions are competitive advantages, but there needs to be more widespread support of these features by devs.
Platform Openness	1	Anchoring memory cards to a single PSN account and restricting access to media only irritates and frustrates users. Again, the model here is to make Vita use smartphone-easy.
PlayStation Plus	X	Sony's premium service and its free games, discounts, and cloud storage is coming to Vita. No grade yet because we haven't tried it hands-on, but we anticipate greatness.

Miscellaneous	Grade	Comments
Price	1	Bottom line: It's too expensive. Lower the price of hardware, memory cards, and data plans, and they will come...
Support	2	Vita is bursting with great ideas, but implementing and unleashing its potential currently comes in slow, meticulous steps. Time to open the floodgates, Sony.
Form Factor	2	Cool new colors are fun, but a hardware upgrade in a year or two would be nice. Better cameras and battery top our current wish list.

Overall Assessement	Grade	Comments
Gifted but underachieving	2	Games and pricing are key. The tech-packed Vita needs to go head-on with Nintendo's 3DS at its lower price point to conquer the portable market.

Ptom 12/1/2012

Teacher Signature Date



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-Machinima

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-X-Play

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18 BEST OF E3 Awards & Nominations

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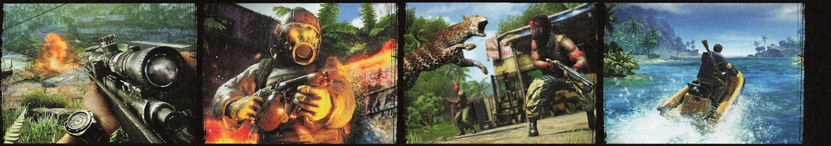

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7 Happy Birthday, Ratchet & Clank!

Unseen concept art celebrates the platforming pals turning 10

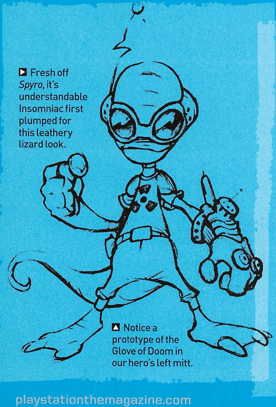
Somewhere in the vast reaches of the cosmos lies Bizarro Land. A place where you're currently clasping a boomerang-shaped DualShock, you've just finished watching *Revenge of the Jedi* on HD DVD, and Insomniac's super-cute intergalactic space rodent is a slightly disturbing salamander thingy.

This amazing batch of concept art from the original *Ratchet & Clank* was revealed by developer Insomniac to mark the game's 10th birthday. Toasty on the heels of *Spyro's* success, the studio's early sketches from 2000 show off very different versions of the platforming pair. "The idea was to create a spunky alien with a crazy gadget gauntlet and some *Bionic Commando* traversal abilities," explains CEO John Fiorito. "Eventually, his reptilian body gave way to a more relatable cat form."

The first vision of Clank was an equally radical departure from *R&C's* final, huggable metallic midget. "He was a mechanical lizard," admits Fiorito. A decade of successful sequels on, we reckon Insomniac made a wise move ditching the goggle-wearing Gex wannabe and his tiny reptile chum for the now-iconic rodent/robot double act we all love.

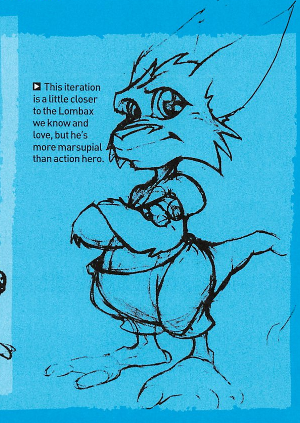
From Lizard to Lombax

While Ratchet 1.0 looks like he's just squirmed his way out of your toilet, the revised reptile has more in common with our hairy-eared hero than you may realize. As Fiorito explains: "He has many of his final characteristics—oversized hands and weapons, a gadget glove, three-toed feet, and pilot gear." We're glad the team ditched his nuclear-meltdown chic, though.



▶ Fresh off *Spyro*, it's understandable Insomniac first plumped for this leathery lizard look.

▲ Notice a prototype of the Glove of Doom in our hero's left mitt.

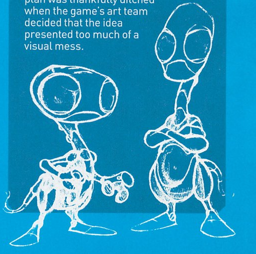


▶ This iteration is a little closer to the Lombax we know and love, but he's more marsupial than action hero.

◀ **Clank's achingly adorable final form, complete with time-distorting science stick.**

Drawing a Clank

The pair of figures below—which we can only really describe as "featherless robo-ostriches that appear to have been farmed from the psyche of a child who burns things"—represent the first vision for Clank. Initially, Insomniac planned to have three of these sidekicks who would travel alongside Ratchet and clamber around on his back, but this plan was thankfully ditched when the game's art team decided that the idea presented too much of a visual mess.



8 Portable Plus

Sony's PlayStation Plus premium service heads to PS Vita

PS3 PlayStation Plus members are quite familiar with the benefits of premium membership: a line-up of free quality games available for play, exclusive content discounts, 1GB of cloud game-save storage, Trophy synching, and the convenience of auto game and system update downloads. PS Plus offers hundreds of dollars in annual savings while simultaneously eliminating or minimizing our beloved console's quirky annoyances.

Come November, the PlayStation Plus service's economical and convenient features will be available to PS Vita owners as well. Full versions of designated Vita games will be available for free play as long as a Plus membership is active, while a whole array of Vita-specific discounts will join the PS3 offerings as well. Members with both a PS3 and PS Vita don't even have to split their cloud storage space, as they have access to 2GBs of total space—1GB for each console. Best of all, PS3 owners with existing PS Plus memberships and first-time PS Vita Plus members will have access to services on both systems for no extra cost.

PlayStation Plus subscription plans include a 90-day plan for $18.99 and a one-year plan for $49.99. While there may have been a time when the benefits of PS Plus memberships could be debatable, it's now near impossible to dismiss the upside of Sony's premium PSN service.

SONY
PlayStation Plus
PS VITA
SELECT

9 PTOM Media

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It may have been a long time coming, but *PlayStation: The Official Magazine* is making the leap into podcasts. *TalkStation* is currently a monthly show hosted by PTOM editors Mikel Reparaz, Scott Butterworth, and Anne Lewis. It's a behind-the-scenes look at what goes on while we're making the magazine: funny stories about the games we cover, details that didn't make it into an issue, or maybe just bizarre tangents. Above all, our goal is to provide you with an entertaining hour or so of supplemental content, so send us your feedback and questions at http://facebook.com/PTOMus.

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Is weakness the key to fear? *The Walking Dead* seems to think so.

10 Have modern horror games lost their edge?

Has an increased focus on action watered down the sense of fear?

Yes
Says the fearless
Mikel Reparaz

For dedicated horror-game fans, the current generation hasn't held too many scares. Horror stalwarts like *Resident Evil*, *Alone in the Dark*, and even *Silent Hill* have increasingly abandoned fright for bigger action. Sudden shocks and gore seem to be all it takes to be considered "survival horror." Once, I thought this was just a case of me getting old, but a few recent games have convinced me that's not the only problem.

Dead Space 2, for example, is a fantastic action-adventure that tries hard to be terrifying, with plenty of sudden scares, creepy noises, and moments when we're suddenly surrounded by fast-moving monsters. These fail, however, because *I'm stronger than they are*. If Isaac Clarke can just haul off and bash Necromorphs to pieces, they are no longer scary. Ditto for *Resident Evil 6*, in which Leon launches himself into mobs of zombies to suplex them into oblivion.

Contrast that with Telltale's *Walking Dead*, which features a relatively weak protagonist, danger that can strike at any second, and a limited view of our surroundings. These things conspire to create a constant dread and apprehension I haven't felt since *Silent Hill 2*. It's proof that games *can* still deliver true, pulse-pounding horror—but only if publishers can let go of their own fear that anything less than an accessible power fantasy will hurt sales.

No
Says the scare-seeking
Scott Butterworth

It's true: the mainstream definition of "survival horror" certainly seems to have shifted in recent years. Slow-paced, psychological games like *Silent Hill 2* have been replaced with more action-focused titles like *Dead Space 2*. No one can deny this change. But isn't it possible that the definition of horror has broadened, not weakened? Isn't *Dead Space 2* still scary on some level, even without a Pyramid Head? Of course it is.

In the case of *Dead Space* and other games like it, "horror" is simply a useful descriptor. With its chilling sound design, grotesque monsters, gratuitous gore, and sudden scares, how else are we supposed to describe it? Certainly the gameplay could accurately be characterized as "action-adventure" or maybe even "first-person shooter," but that really doesn't tell the whole story, does it? Even if players feel a bit *too* empowered as Clarke, that doesn't change the fact the game contains a broad swath of essential horror-game elements. Arguing that it's just not terrifying *enough* to earn the title is pedantic.

"True" horror games are still out there. As Mikel pointed out, the *Walking Dead* games are excellent, as is the free indie title *Slender* on PC. Sure, neither is a major big-budget experience, but do they even need to be? Many of the scariest games of all time are also extremely simple. Just relax and...look out behind you.

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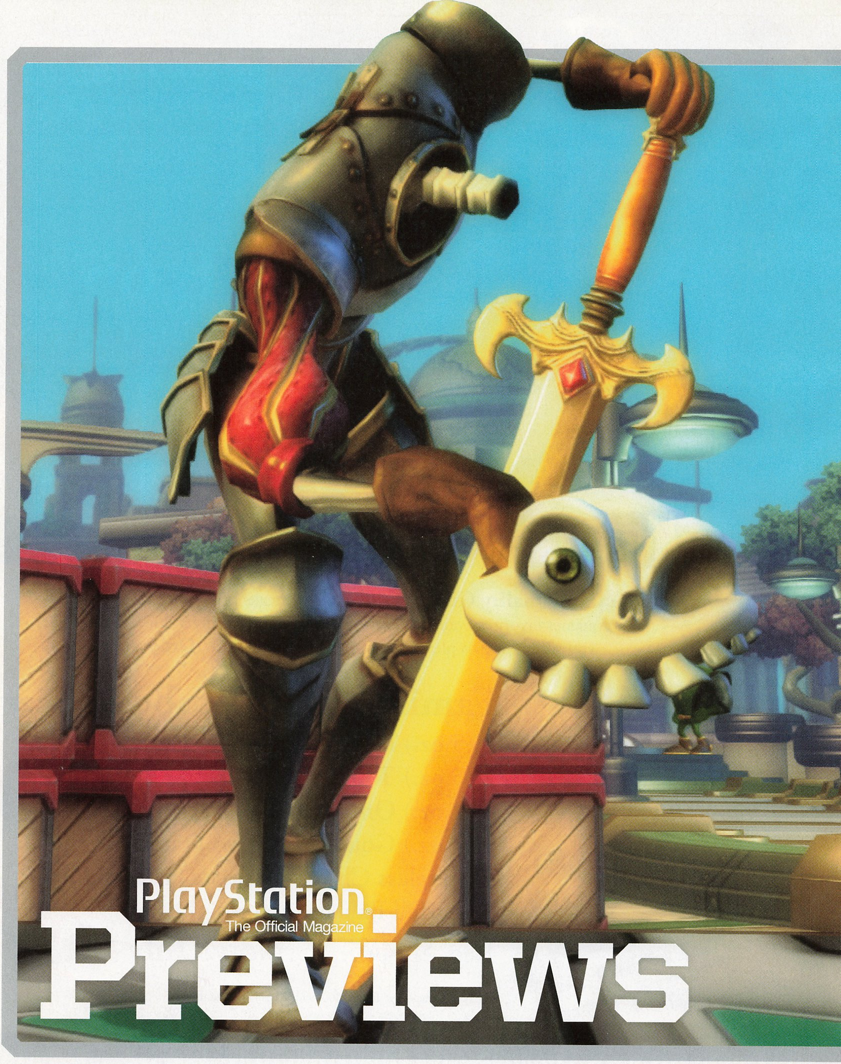


PlayStation®
The Official Magazine

Previews

HANDS-ON Format **PS3/PS Vita** ETA **November** Pub **SCEA** Dev **SuperBot Entertainment**

PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale

Four-player fighting as a solo experience

There's an elephant in the room whenever we talk about *PlayStation All-Stars: Battle Royale*, and its name is *Super Smash Bros.* It's true that Sony's mashup fighter, which brings together 20 diverse characters from across PlayStation history, shares more than a few similarities with Nintendo's own crossover brawlfest—from its very concept to its simple, platformy approach to fighting. But *Battle Royale*'s director, Omar Kendall, isn't shy about addressing those similarities—or about setting the record straight.

"We're fans of the entire fighting-game, brawling-game genre. We're taking all the elements that we love of this great genre and we're sort of adding our twist on fighting games and brawlers," says Kendall. "The biggest challenge is—because the game does bear some strong resemblance to *Super Smash Bros.*—that people immediately come in with an expectation that 'it must play like *Super Smash Bros.* or they've done something wrong, because clearly their attempt was just to rip this game off.' And that really wasn't our intention. There are obviously elements we're pulling not just from *Smash Bros.*, but from a lot of fighting games.

"Yes, there is a lot about this game that is similar to a game that you may have played before," continues Kendall, "but there also is something very, very different that we're trying to do. And it's not on accident, and it's not a mistake. It is quite intentional."

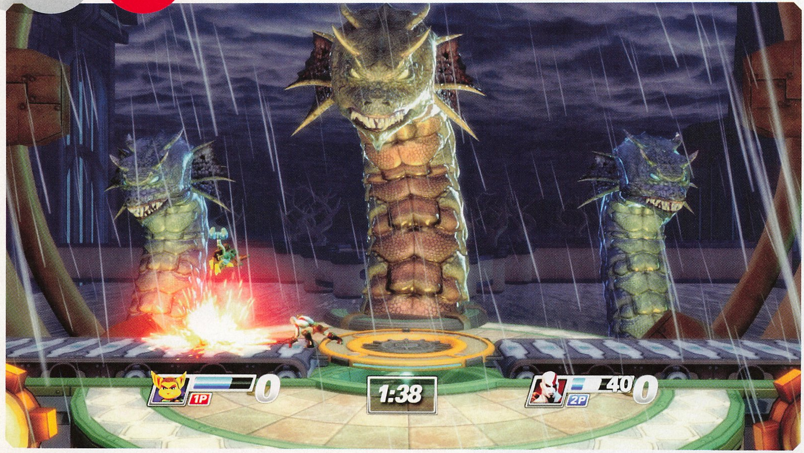
For starters, Kendall points out, the ▸▸

Quick Pitch

Story-Driven
Battle Royale's single-player arcade mode gives each character a rival and a reason to fight.

Worlds Collide
The final launch roster features 20 combatants from almost as many game franchises.

Size Matters
Saving up points for big super attacks is the key to victory.



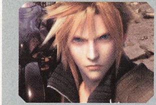
The "transitions" in each level aren't just for looks—if something big and nasty shows up in the background, expect it to attack.

flow of *Battle Royale*'s combat is unique. Rather than trying to chip away at our opponents' health bars, the goal is to build up our own super-attack meters by accruing Attack Points, awarded as we beat the tar out of enemies. These meters have three levels and the resultant attacks become increasingly unavoidable as they grow more powerful; for example, a level-one super as *BioShock*'s Big Daddy tosses a syringe-packing Little Sister directly at one enemy, while a level-three attack floods the screen, making opponents float helplessly as we close in for the kill. Only by connecting with these one-hit-kill attacks can we eliminate opponents, eventually winning by either depleting their stocks of lives, hitting a predetermined kill limit, or scoring the most kills before time runs out.

Once we've grasped that, *Battle Royale* becomes easy to understand. Each of the 20 fighters come with around two dozen special moves, activated by hitting a direction on the Left-analog stick and one of the three attack buttons. These range from *LittleBigPlanet's* Sackboy plunking down a huge fan to force enemies away, to *DmC's* Dante unleashing a bloom of multidirectional gunfire while spinning in midair. Every character has a different feel and strategy, but they're all accessible enough that new players won't get lost wading into the chaos of a match.

And the matches *are* chaotic—not only does each stage feature "transitions" that bring characters from one franchise into the setting of another (i.e. *Killzone 3's* towering MAWLR busting into PaRappa's stage to fire

Five characters We'd love to see playable in future DLC



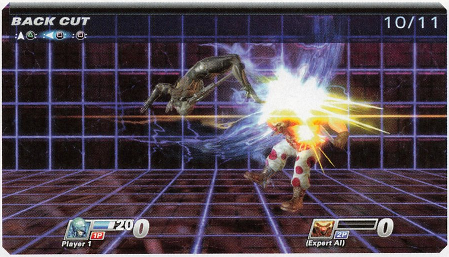
Cloud Strife
Cloud helped convert millions of *Final Fantasy* fans to the PSone; it seems only fair he join the roster.

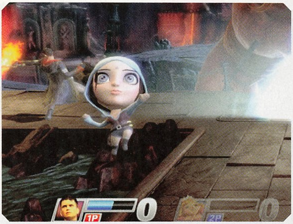
Crash Bandicoot
We don't care who owns him now—it won't be a true nostalgia-fest until he tells "Plumber Boy" to suck it.

Rau
The Mark of Kri's brutal hero gets a few nods in *Battle Royale*, but we want to crack skulls as the man himself.

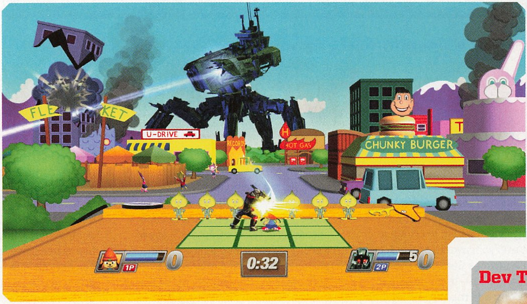
Tommy Vercetti
GTA: Vice City's acid-washed gangster hasn't been seen in years. Why not bring him back for one last brawl?

Old Snake
Raiden's cool and all, but if it's all the same, we'd rather have Octo-Camo and David Hayter's signature growl.





"Minions," like this big-headed Kat from *DmC*, can be unlocked and used as cheerleaders during matches.



missiles at us), but they frequently shift in ways meant to keep us on our toes, like the way the *LocoRoco* stage periodically floods with water, forcing us to higher ground. Toss in assorted limited-use items, like rocket launchers and freeze missiles, and the action stays pretty frenetic.

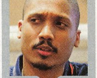
And that's all great, but without a little bit of story to back it all up, we might as well be making our action figures fight. So while *Battle Royale's* focus is clearly on multiplayer, it also comes with a robust set of single-player options, not the least of which is its arcade mode.

Here, each character gets a short storyline to pursue, many of which were put together with help from the characters' creators (Big Daddy's bizarre cutscenes, for example, were written by *BioShock* creator Ken Levine, while Sackboy and Kratos get narration from Stephen Fry and Linda Hunt, respectively). Their goals are sometimes predictable—Kratos wants to test his skills, PaRappa wants to impress Sunny Funny, and so on—but things get weird when each character comes face-to-face with their rival. These confrontations unfold in a cutscene and one-on-one battle just before the final boss (who will be instantly recognizable to old-school PSone fans), and include Kratos throwing down with fellow David Jaffe creation Sweet Tooth, *Tekken's* wicked Heihachi facing off against amiably helpful cat-thing Toro Inoue, and Big Daddy flying into a rage when his Little Sister decides Sackboy is cuter than he is.

Stories aside, arcade mode puts us through a variety of match types with different victory conditions, and it's an excellent way to learn each character's rhythms—as are the tutorials and Combat Trials, which feature short, character-specific challenges meant to teach new skills and put them to the test.

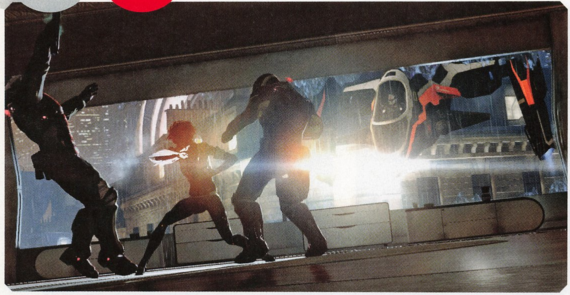
It may have taken a few cues from *Smash Bros.*, but as *Battle Royale* grows more polished and balanced, it's clear that it's more than a clone. And with its surprisingly deep single-player modes, wealth of multiplayer options, and scores of unlockable accessories (including cheerleader-like "Minions", such as *Ratchet & Clank's* Captain Qwark and *DmC's* Kat), it looks like there's plenty for dedicated brawler fans to bite into. **MIKEL REPARAZ**

Dev Talk



"First and foremost, if we don't pull these characters off and meet the fan expectation—Sly Cooper feels like Sly, Nariko feels like Nariko—we've failed on a very fundamental level. So we had to get the characters right. And then we come in, once we feel like we've really nailed the essence and personality of the character, and we try to accommodate them within the *Battle Royale* fight system."

Omar Kendall
Game Director



FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **May 2013** Pub **Capcom** Dev **DONTNOD Entertainment**

Remember Me

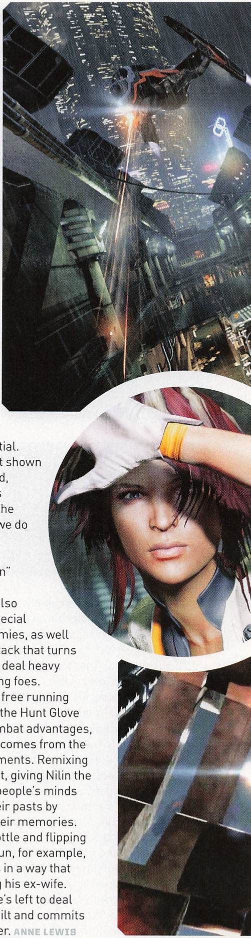
Becoming the hunted

Following the climate wars of the mid-21st century, Paris was rebuilt. In the wake of rampant depression, a corporation called Memoreyes stepped in to create a product everyone would crave: A brain implant known as Sensen—short for Sensation Engine—that allows people to delete or trade memories, enabling them to relive happy thoughts over and over. At the heart of *Remember Me* is an activist group called the Errorists, who fight the control of Memoreyes. These activists hunt and "remix" memories, and Nilin was the best until her own mind was messed with and she became the hunted.

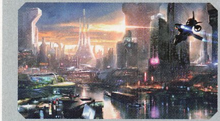
Our first look at *Remember Me's* gameplay depicts a lengthy escape across a rooftop as Captain Trace of the city's militaristic Sabre Force pursues Nilin. Trace may be in a helicopter for the entirety of the scene, but Nilin has her Hunt Glove. Her speedy retreat is hardly hindered by locked doors—her glove is just as capable at disabling locks as it is remixing minds. Inside the buildings, Sabre Force officers attack, and we begun to see and understand the glove's combat potential.

Much of the combat shown so far is hand-to-hand, demonstrating Nilin's competency without the use of her glove, but we do see her use it to fire projectiles as well to perform an "execution" move called Memory Overload. The glove also provides Nilin with special attacks that stun enemies, as well as a more focused attack that turns them into bombs that deal heavy damage to surrounding foes.

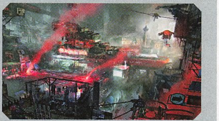
Though the game's free running looks competent and the Hunt Glove gives Nilin unique combat advantages, *Remember Me's* edge comes from the game's remixing segments. Remixing adds a puzzle element, giving Nilin the chance to reach into people's minds and subtly change their pasts by affecting objects in their memories. By knocking over a bottle and flipping the safety off on his gun, for example, she influences events in a way that end with a man killing his ex-wife. When Nilin is done, he's left to deal with the implanted guilt and commits suicide soon thereafter. ANNE LEWIS



The Concepts Neo-Paris, 2084

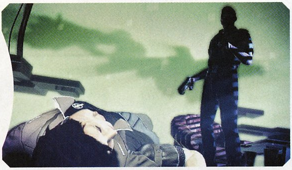


The High Life
The cyberpunk aesthetic fully extends to the look of the city. The towering skyscrapers, smooth lines, and overwhelming reliance on technology come screaming from the pages of manga like *Ghost in the Shell* and *Akira*. At the very center is the Memoreyes HQ.

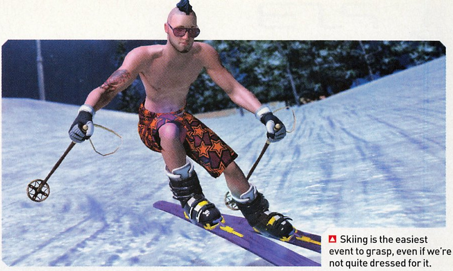


In the Slums
The decadence of High Paris hides the squalor of other areas. Mid and Low Paris are home to the slums and the remnants of Old Paris. Looking closely at this art reveals the once-resplendent Place de la Bastille standing not far from the Eiffel Tower.

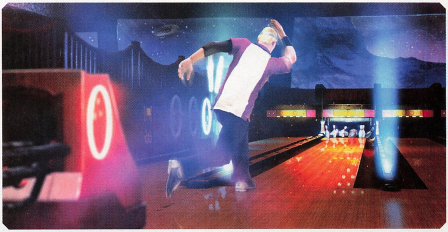
▼ Even with a helicopter firing at her constantly, Nilin is able to keep her cool and leap quickly from handhold to handhold.



▲ In the real world, his ex-wife is still alive, but according to Frank's memory, he killed her months ago.



▲ Skiing is the easiest event to grasp, even if we're not quite dressed for it.



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **SCEA** Dev **SCE San Diego Studio/Zindagi Games**

Sports Champions 2

Goodbye calibrations, hello party!

Sports Champions may have left early Move adopters cold with its demandingly frequent calibrations and lukewarm events, but the sequel opts to build on its potential as a party powerhouse. And while it lacks online play, *Sports Champions 2* is a noticeably more polished update that eliminates pre-event recalibrating, delivering six events that champion local multiplayer.

Archery, boxing, skiing, golf, tennis, and bowling head up the marquee this time around. Skiing feels the most complete and natural, requiring us to mimic an actual skier's movements by dangling our controllers to our sides and crouching down to gain momentum and pull off "carving" with the greatest of ease. Jumps are touchy, but become smooth sailing once we learned how to nail landings at an angle to avoid wipeouts.

Golf requires us to assume the position that the pros would, as if we were actually swinging a tangible driver. Adding power to the shot and aiming for where the ball should land quickly became second nature, though controlling how far the ball actually sailed was a bit difficult at first.

Tennis, meanwhile, is a familiar blend of make-it-count serves and frenetic scrambles to the net, recalling late-night *Top Spin* challenges and the Frisbee Golf from the original *Sports Champions*.

Party Play let us choose from locked events without the need to painstakingly play through each. With nine rounds to customize and "party points" to accumulate, it's a robust, nonstop mode for impatient players. If our brush with this follow-up to 2010's Move pack-in is any indication, motion control-friendly families may soon have a new go-to party game that doesn't involve butchering popular songs or answering trivia questions. **BRITTANY VINCENT**

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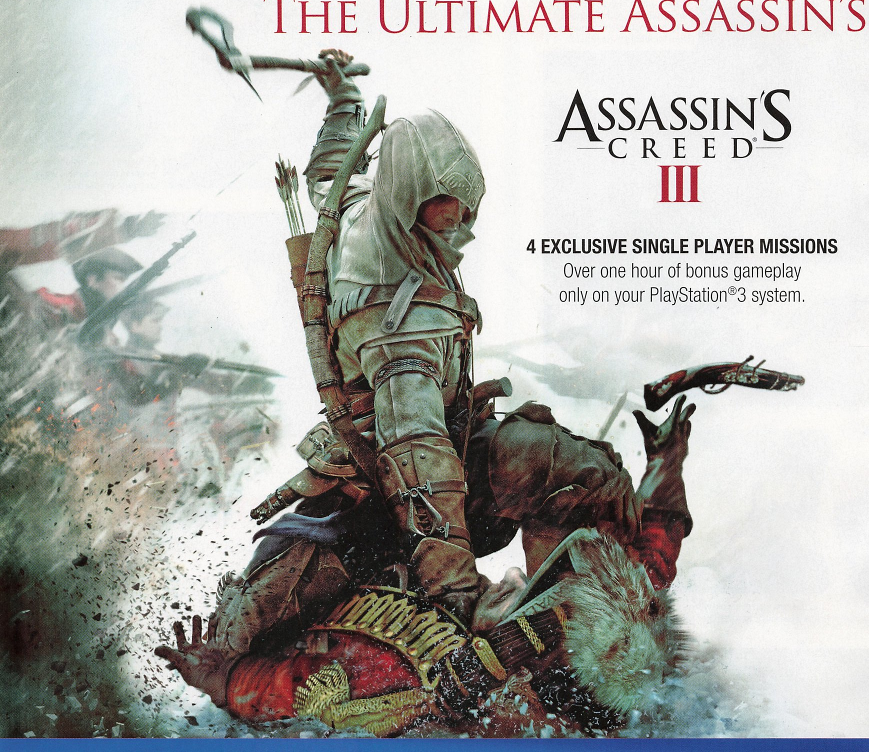

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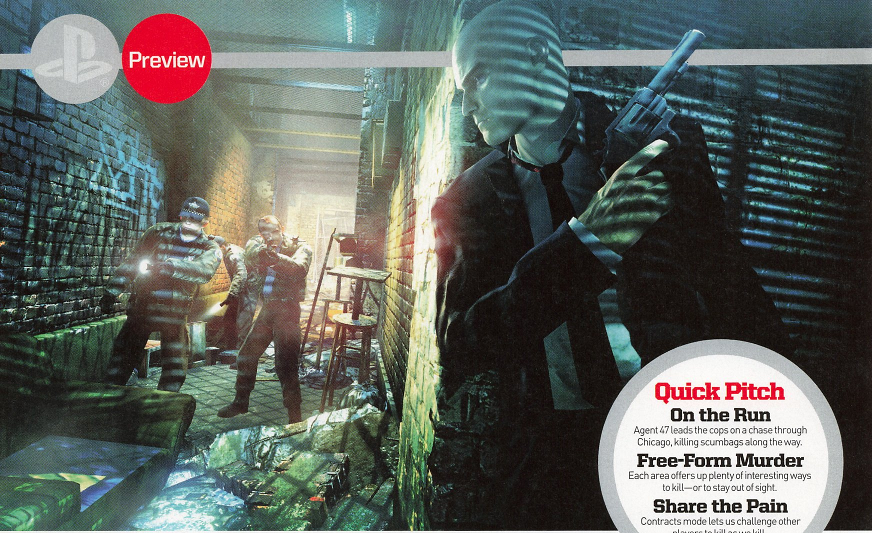


Quick Pitch

On the Run

Agent 47 leads the cops on a chase through Chicago, killing scumbags along the way.

Free-Form Murder

Each area offers up plenty of interesting ways to kill—or to stay out of sight.

Share the Pain

Contracts mode lets us challenge other players to kill as we kill.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Square Enix** Dev **Io Interactive**

Hitman Absolution

Crowds, cops, and Contracts

Agent 47—normally cool, collected, and in control of every situation—has had his world turned upside-down. After being ordered to execute the only person he's ever really trusted, he finds himself charged with protecting a young girl named Victoria against the same shadowy Agency that has employed him for years. While trying to discover why she's being hunted, he's implicated in a murder he didn't commit (for once)—and now, he's charging desperately from one stage after another, with Chicago's police hot on his trail.

In its pacing and tone, at least, *Hitman: Absolution* is more than a little different from its predecessors. Over the course of the game, 47 still finds himself tasked with liberating marked targets from their unsavory mortal coils, and he's still got an impressive amount of options for doing so. Disguises, trickery, gunfire, bombs, ambushes in dark alleys—they're all possibilities, and it's entirely up to us whether we want to slip ninja-like past the guards and only kill our target, or simply run through crowds, guns blazing. (It might affect our score at the end, but results are all that matter, really.) Most of these aren't "missions" or "contracts" in the traditional sense, though; 47's targets are simply people with some connection to Victoria, and with Chicago's finest actively hunting him, escaping from his crimes often takes more preparation and creativity than committing them.

The All-Seeing Eye

Luckily, 47 has a few new abilities at his disposal, not the least of which is Instinct. Like Batman's Detective Vision, it reveals (through walls, even) our targets, possible hostiles, and environmental points of interest. It also shows guard paths, lets us slip past people who might otherwise see through our disguises, and enables Point Shooting, letting 47 line up several targets at once and take them all out in one rapid sequence—useful for handling groups of unsuspecting enemies. And if things get really hairy, we can nonlethally dispatch enemies with a quick fistfight, handled as a brief quick-time event.

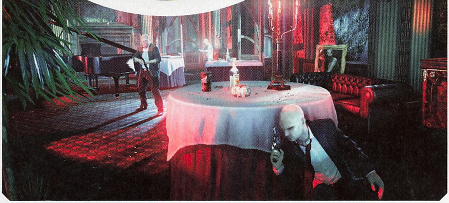
The stages we've played so far in *Absolution* tend to take one of two shapes: semi-linear pathways through which we have to evade (or fight) guards and pursuers, and larger, more open areas filled with different ways to dispatch our targets (and, more often than not, with crowds for us to blend into). Careful exploration is rewarded with vents to crawl through, ledges to climb around on, and heavy items that

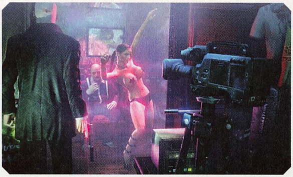
Dev Talk

"[For Contracts,] we were looking at what fans were doing with the old games, and they were basically selecting different targets after they'd played through the game like 20 times. They'd say, 'Okay, now this guy's not a target anymore, I'll select another character and see how that goes.' It was really inspiring for us to see how much content they could generate without any tools or content other than their imagination."

Tore Blystad,
Game Director

Sure, there's an assault rifle sitting right there, but killing three thugs with a screwdriver is no problem for *real* pros.





We *could* murder this poor stripper, but we might get our target alone if we wait for her to wrap up.

With Chicago's finest hunting 47, escaping from his crimes often takes more creativity than committing them.

might "accidentally" fall and kill someone. The challenge here isn't in simply finding or killing our targets—thanks in large part to Instinct, we can pinpoint them pretty quickly. The trick is to kill them in a way that, while awesome, won't get *us* killed.

Dropping a remote-detonated bomb next to a Chinese gangster's car before setting off its alarm and slipping off into the crowd is one way to do this. So is sneaking into a back room at a crowded strip club, watching through a two-way mirror as the owner gets a private dance, and then shooting him through said mirror while he chats on his cell phone before dumping his body in a convenient chest. If there are any witnesses, we can easily subdue or kill them, but there's a certain satisfaction in a clean getaway—particularly if we can make it look like an accident, or kill silently enough that nobody even knows anything's amiss.

Challenge the World

For some players, even that won't be enough. Enter *Absolution's* new Contracts mode, a user-generated challenge mode that lets us pick a stage, mark up to three of its persistent denizens as targets, and kill them. The game then records the details of the kills—which weapon we used, which disguise we wore, whether anyone noticed—and then lets us share the resulting Contract online, challenging others to do what we just did, like a lethal game of Horse. It may not be the most open approach to UGC, but it's quick, easy, and surprisingly fun, and the challenge aspect is intriguing—as is the fact that in order to challenge others to do something, we have to do it ourselves first. **MIKEL REPARAZ**

Five of our favorite hiding spots

1 **Crowds**
Just standing still in the middle of a group is often enough to escape detection.

2 **Vents**
When we need a quick escape or a hidden entrance, these come in very handy.

3 **Chests**
These are hidden all over the place, and they're roomy enough for 47 *and* a victim.

4 **Cannabis Farm**
A raid on an indoor grow operation lets us hide from cops in a forest of weed.

5 **In Plain Sight**
With the right outfit and judicious use of Instinct, we can fool just about anyone.

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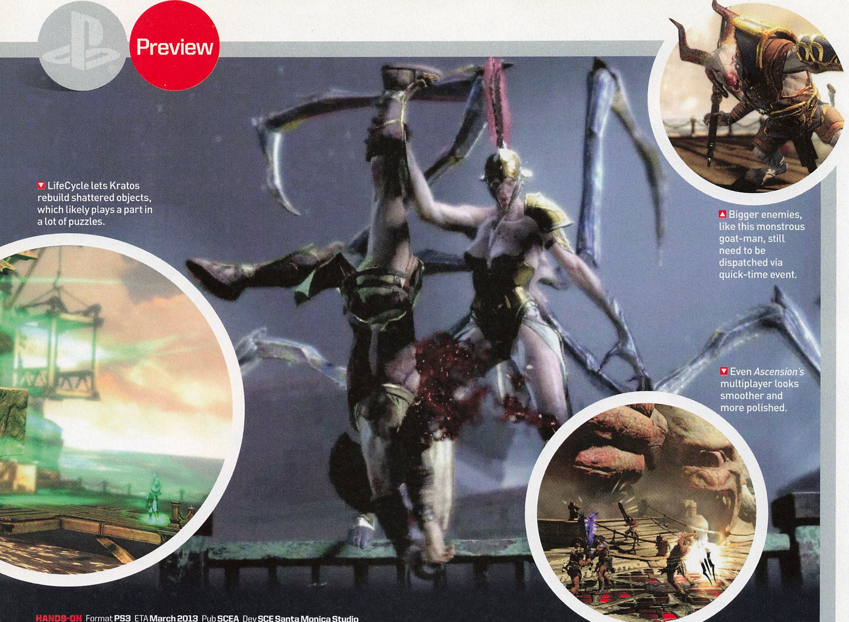


LifeCycle lets Kratos rebuild shattered objects, which likely plays a part in a lot of puzzles.

Bigger enemies, like this monstrous goat-man, still need to be dispatched via quick-time event.

Even *Ascension's* multiplayer looks smoother and more polished.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **March 2013** Pub **SCEA** Dev **SCE Santa Monica Studio**

God of War Ascension

Younger, faster, and a whole lot prettier

The last time we saw the younger, leaner Kratos of *God of War: Ascension*, he was fighting goat-men on an island, reassembling broken scenery with something called LifeCycle, and literally ripping the brain out of a stocky Elephantaur. This time, he was...well, he was doing pretty much the exact same stuff, but being able to actually play as him while he did so made all the difference.

If *God of War III's* monster-eviscerating gameplay had a stomping, brutal feel to it, *Ascension* feels a little faster, a little more fluid, and a little more refined. The controls have been shifted around just enough that we had to readjust; Kratos' block/parry ability has been moved to L1, while R1 is now used both for grabbing defeated enemies (and quickly ripping them apart) and for latching onto them with Kratos' new chain-tether. The tether acts as a lock-on mechanic, focusing Kratos' attention onto one particular enemy (while still being able to whale on the crowds of other baddies around them), although we can also use it to slam our victims around like furry wrecking balls.

The more striking change, however, is the new, semi-disposable sub-weapons, which have been mapped to the Circle button. Picking up a sword lets us use it seamlessly in combos with the Blades of Chaos without ever missing a beat—there's no stutter or awkwardness, it just feels like a natural part of combat. The same can't be said of the javelins we found later, though; as distance weapons, they're meant more as a way to let us fall back, rather than to supplement our combos.

We've also gotten our first glimpse at the Furies, the three Greek enforcer goddesses who'll hound Kratos throughout *Ascension's* prequel storyline. One of them, Megaera (shown above), clambers around on four grotesque, Dr. Octopus-like legs that sprout from her back. Given how good *Ascension's* combat already feels, we can't wait to make Kratos yank them all out. **MIKEL REPARAZ**

Can't wait? Play this

God of War Saga
(PS3, 2012)
Collecting all five *God of War* games in one remastered $40 package, *Saga* eliminates the last excuse for those who've never played through Kratos' adventures. Before seeing how his story began, why not find out how it ended?

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2013** Pub **Deep Silver** Dev **Keen Games**

Sacred 3

Keep it secret, keep it safe

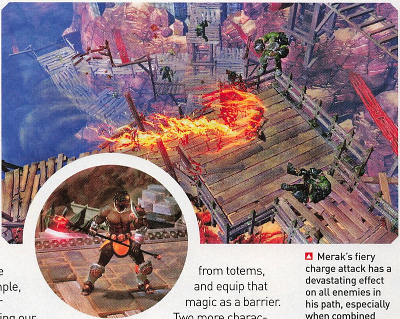
The Heart of Ancaria is a powerful tool capable of determining the fate of the world. In the wrong hands, the results would be disastrous. Zane Ashen—the ruler of the Ashen Empire—would definitely be considered "the wrong hands." Though the Heart has been hidden by Seraphim, Zane is set on finding it, and the task of stopping him falls on the shoulders of four heroes.

So far, we've seen two areas of *Sacred 3*—one in a dungeon, and the other a road leading to a dungeon—and in each area, we slashed our way through hordes of the game's new enemy, the Grimmoc. During battle, *Sacred 3's* isometric angles offer a limited view of our surroundings, although the camera occasionally pans to give us a look around or point us to our goal.

Each of the four playable classes has access to unique Combat Art attacks, giving us a magical edge. Where Merak the Safiri Berserker wields the power of the sun, for example, Serea the Ancarian Lancer harnesses the land. Chaining our Combat Arts with our partners' can lead to some deadly team-based executions. Scenario Skills also give us extra oomph in battle; Merak can use one called Drain to siphon magic from totems, and equip that magic as a barrier.

Two more characters are on the way, and while they're still unannounced, we'd put money on one of them being the Seraphim of previous games.

ANNE LEWIS



▲ Merak's fiery charge attack has a devastating effect on all enemies in his path, especially when combined with his partner's Combat Arts.

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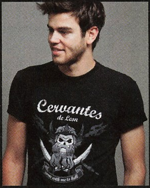

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Graeme Boyd, Xbox

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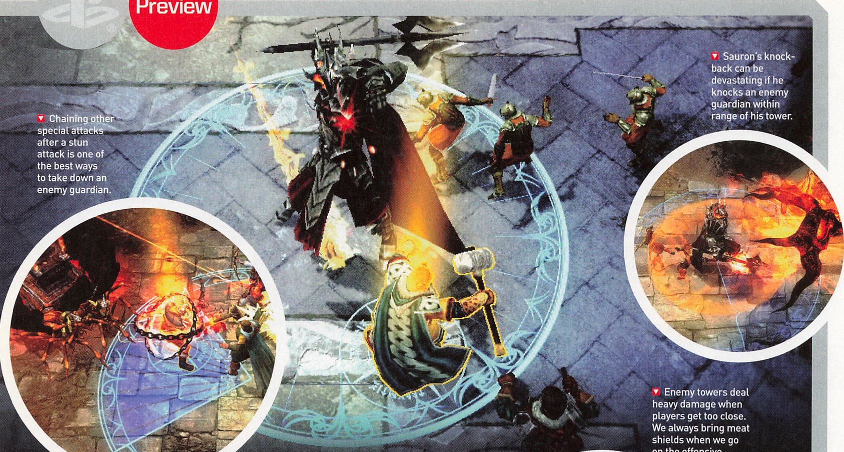
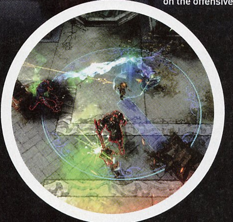


Chaining other special attacks after a stun attack is one of the best ways to take down an enemy guardian.

Sauron's knock-back can be devastating if he knocks an enemy guardian within range of his tower.

Enemy towers deal heavy damage when players get too close. We always bring meat shields when we go on the offensive.



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2012** Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.** Dev **Monolith Productions**

Guardians of Middle-earth

Lord of the Rings goes MOBA

The MOBA (that's multiplayer online battle arena, for console-only gamers) genre is a rare one to see on PS3. If we had to guess, we'd say it's because the controls just don't translate well—meticulously organized hotkeys go over so much better on a keyboard than on a DualShock. However, *Guardians of Middle-earth* takes the complex mechanics of PC MOBAs and boils them down to a much more console-friendly level.

Taking place within the *Lord of the Rings* universe, *Guardians* features over 20 characters from the series, including Sauron, Gollum, Gandalf, and Aragorn's father, Arathorn. Each of these characters belongs to a different class, and each has a unique set of skills that defines the ideal way to play that character. For example, a tactician character, like the hobbit Hildifons, does more good planting mines and setting up turrets than wading into the heat of battle.

Arenas are divided into lanes containing a series of towers to defend or attack and the classes all have a specific role on this battlefield. While tanks like Sauron go after enemy towers, characters like Runsig might be more suited to buffing friendly players and their towers.

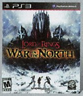
The objectives vary, but the overall idea is to destroy our enemies' towers and rack up points in the process. These points determine the winner in timed modes when the towers aren't destroyed before time runs out. In other modes, play continues until all towers are destroyed, which can take a while depending on the competency of the teams.

During our 20-minute match, we found ourselves oddly addicted. Racing toward an enemy tower with minions in tow wasn't as exhilarating or fast-paced in a top-down strategy game as it would be with an assault rifle in an FPS, but there's something incredibly satisfying about leading a calculated charge and tearing through the guardians in our path before decimating their tower.

ANNE LEWIS

Can't wait? Play this

Awesomenauts
(PSN, 2012)
Awesomenauts is a great introduction to the MOBA genre. It's easy to grasp and cheap, but has very few arenas.



Lord of the Rings: War in the North
(PS3, 2011)
War in the North may not have been a great game, but it's bloody good *Lord of the Rings* fun.

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Deep Silver** Dev **Techland**

Dead Island Riptide

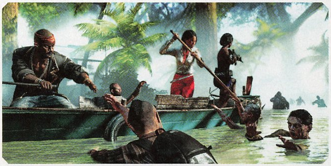
New island, same undead problems

Just when we thought we were headed to safety in a helicopter at the end of *Dead Island*, its sequel, *Riptide,* begins with an emergency landing on a military ship—and it's clear we're not out of the woods yet. Not unexpectedly, the ship goes down, leaving us stranded on a new—and equally infected—island, where flooded portions of the jungle and an improved weather system force us to find new ways to navigate.

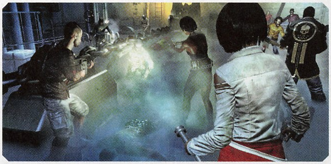
Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of *Riptide* is our ability to use our save file from the first game, meaning we can bring, say, our level-35 Xian Mei and all her skills into this new environment. There's also a new character being added to the roster, though he or she remains secret as of press time.

Our limited time with the game thus far reveals a somewhat familiar experience, as we fend off hordes of zombies while defending the ruins of a church. We can set up fences and mounted machine guns to try to keep the undead out, but sometimes a good defense requires a strong offense. Leaving the relative safety of the church walls to place some mines or beat a few zombies' faces in is a good tactic, but our A.I. teammates don't like to venture out with us, so we're stuck watching our own back.

ANNE LEWIS



Boats are spread throughout the swamps, but zombies floating in the water will occasionally try to squirm their way onboard.



Dead Island's four familiar protagonists are back, and the ability to import saves means we can pick up right where we left off with them.

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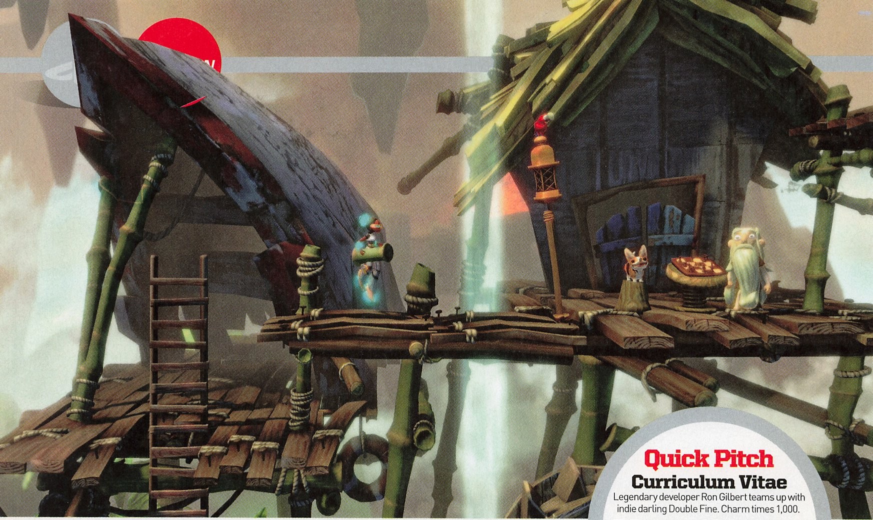


Quick Pitch

Curriculum Vitae
Legendary developer Ron Gilbert teams up with indie darling Double Fine. Charm times 1,000.

A Sense of Adventure
A classic return to form for the adventure genre. Gritty violence is no match for silly puzzles.

Three's Company
Assemble a team of three unique characters to explore the depths of a mysterious talking cave.

HANDS-ON Format **PSN** ETA **Q1 2013** Pub **Sega** Dev **Double Fine Productions**

The Cave

A talking cave? Preposterous!

What do a hot dog vending machine, a deadly spike pit, and the very real possibility of electrocution have in common? The first puzzle in Double Fine Production's brand new downloadable adventure title *The Cave*. Duh. Though the game features a fair amount of 2D platforming and level traversal, its puzzles—goofy and multifaceted, as any true adventure game puzzle should be—lie at the heart of the experience. We've solved a few, but first, we had to select just three spelunkers from the available cast of seven.

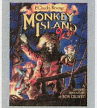
"It's been a long time since I did choosing three characters and that always really appealed to me," explains project lead and longtime adventure-game developer Ron Gilbert. "I really liked in [1987 adventure game] *Maniac Mansion,* where the different characters could solve puzzles in slightly different ways, so I just kind of wanted to do that again with *The Cave*." Unlike other characters, for example, the Scientist can easily avoid the aforementioned electrocution, because she can safely interact with electrical items. "There are lots of puzzles throughout the game where [a specific character] can just do something really special with their ability and not have to solve the whole puzzle chain."

Gilbert also explained that "there's a lot of the game that will be completely different when you choose different characters," like the underground amusement park that only the Hillbilly can access. While that might sound somewhat limiting, it could also add replay value, since a new team would mean both new areas and new puzzle solutions. Of course, everything felt new to us on our first playthrough, so we were more concerned with unlocking all those troublesome gates.

Most of the game's puzzles seem to involve strategically placing the three different characters—who we can swap between on the fly by tapping directions on the D-pad—at different points around the level. The very first gate, for example, can only be opened when two levers are pulled simultaneously, allowing the third adventurer to pass through to prop it open permanently.

The character-swapping was a little unintuitive at first, since we didn't always remember where we last left our characters, but as we grew more accustomed to the mechanic and the puzzles became more sophisticated, we started to have more fun with it. Character movement also felt a little wonky at first, but this too became easier with practice. The one thing the game absolutely nails? Silly, charming fun. We would expect no less from Double Fine. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

Want More?



While Ron Gilbert's masterpiece *Maniac Mansion* can't be found on PSN, his equally awesome adventure *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* can! Download it now for a delicious taste of the genre's roots, and perhaps even a preview of what's to come in *The Cave*.

Q&A

Developer Ron Gilbert on comedy, social gaming, and the future of adventure games

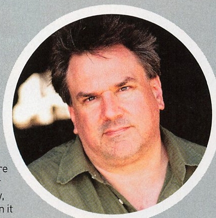


Photo by Imagine Publishing

How did your partnership with Double Fine come to be?

I hired [Double Fine CEO] Tim Schafer when I was at Lucasfilm, right, so I've worked with him for a long time. And the idea for *The Cave* is something I've had in my head since before *Maniac Mansion*. And then one day, I was just hanging out with him and I was telling him about this idea and he really liked it and he said, "Well, why don't you come to Double Fine and, you know, have *us* make that game." So...sure, sounds good to me!

Humor plays a major role in many of your games. What draws you to comedy?

I think [adventure games] need to be funny, because the things that you're doing in an adventure game are so ridiculous that if you can make fun of it in a way, then it's like it becomes okay, right? Where if you're doing an adventure game that's super serious and you have a puzzle about, you know, tying string to a coin and putting bubblegum on it to get a key out of a sewer, that's like a ridiculous thing, right? That never happens in the real world. But if you're doing a comedy, you can kind of make fun of that kind of stuff, and then I just feel that it fits a lot better.

Do you think Double Fine's model of making bite-sized experiences will continue to work for gaming moving forward?

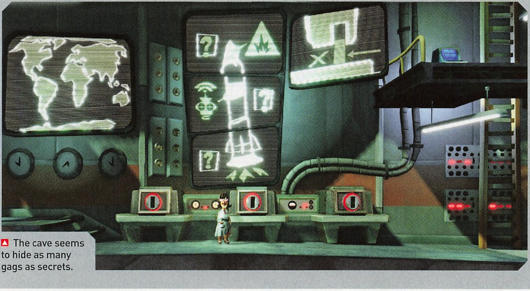
Yeah, I think it will a lot, because there's always going to be hardcore gamers, there's always going to be people who want to spend hundreds of hours playing a game, but as we move into this more casual audience, they are more interested in bite-sized entertainment stuff. They're interested in something that they can sit down and maybe spend five or six hours and completely have finished the game and feel that completion with it, rather than something they have to spend 100 hours playing. So, yeah, I think these smaller, downloadable games really are the future.

Is that what we're seeing happen with the adventure genre right now?

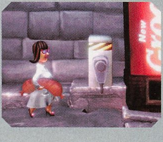
I think what you're seeing now is, you know, because of things like the iPhone, you have this much more casual audience that are now gaming and enjoying games, and I think for a causal audience, things like adventure games are actually very appealing because they're very story based, they're very character based, they don't require quick reflexes, they're using your brain to solve things—so I think that's why we're kind of seeing a resurgence.

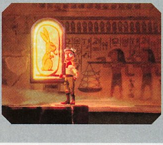
Why have you stuck with the genre for so long?

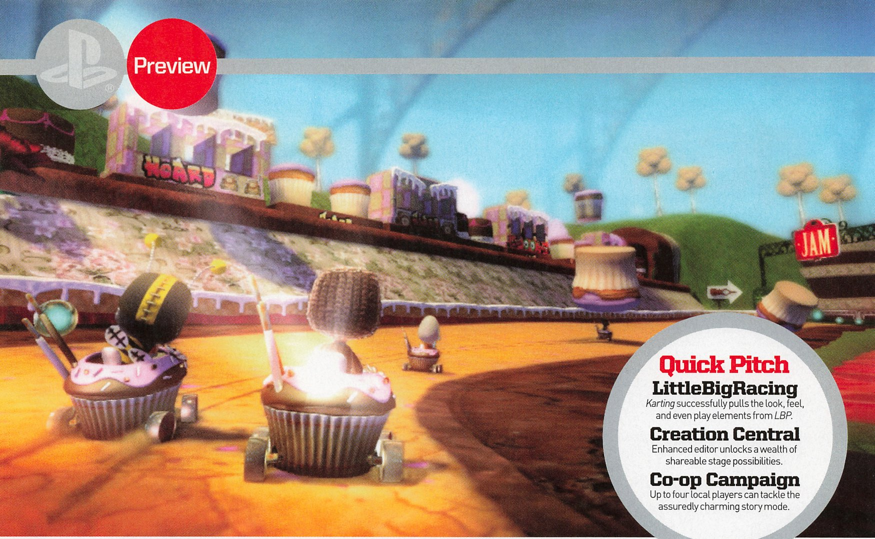
I just love adventure games. I like telling stories, I like creating worlds and creating characters, and so adventure games are just a really great avenue for me to do that.



▲ The cave seems to hide as many gags as secrets.







Quick Pitch

LittleBigRacing

Karting successfully pulls the look, feel, and even play elements from *LBP*.

Creation Central

Enhanced editor unlocks a wealth of shareable stage possibilities.

Co-op Campaign

Up to four local players can tackle the assuredly charming story mode.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **SCEA** Dev **United Front Games**

LittleBigPlanet Karting

Genre jumper loses little in translation

Dev Talk

"You can move the camera around [in the editor], so you can have top-down levels where there's a tank battle. We have a side-scrolling level. Someone in the beta built a 3D helicopter simulator. Someone made an alarm clock with radio stations. It's vast. Kart racing is just the tip of the iceberg, really."

Nick Letizia
Gameplay Designer

Hailing from *ModNation Racers* developer United Front Games, *LittleBigPlanet Karting* has a fair bit to prove—not only that it can translate Media Molecule's beloved platform franchise into a raucous four-wheeled romp, but also that it's more than simply a dressed-up retread of the studio's other creation-focused racer.

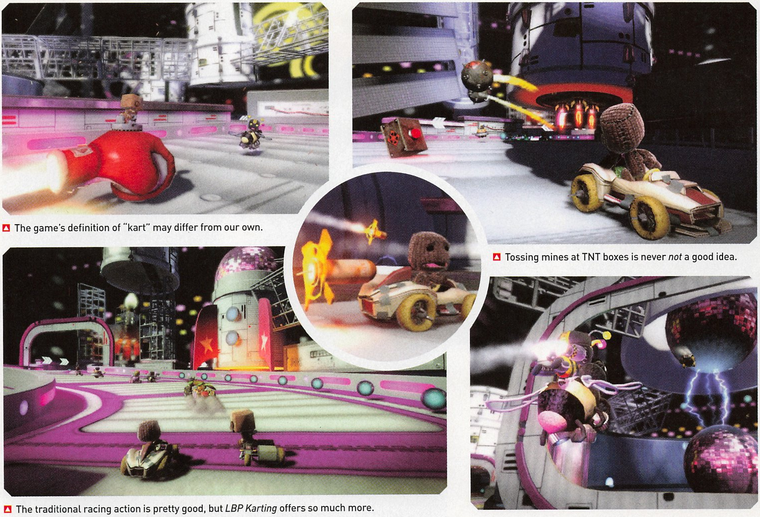
Our latest hands-on went a long way towards easing both concerns, especially with regard to replicating the established *LittleBigPlanet* aesthetic. *Karting* nails the look and feel, with tracks made of fabric, cardboard, and myriad other objects, while the oddball costume and vehicle pairings—like a lemon-shaped outfit with a straw sticking out the top, inside of an automotive cupcake—are a natural extension of the endlessly charming style seen in the core *LBP* games.

Even the structure and storytelling hit familiar notes, with the game starting off in the Pod, where Sackboy can customize his look and ride via the PopIt menu before shooting off to various fabric planets adorned with races and other missions. Series narrator Stephen Fry is also back to dictate the tale of The Hoard, which aims to steal Craftworld's prizes in the four-player campaign.

We haven't seen the co-op in action just yet, but this fresh taste of what to expect from the story mode's missions did help highlight the differences between *Karting* and *ModNation*. The two titles do share common handling and physics models, and feel similar when power-sliding around tight turns. But somewhere between the massive jump pad and the prompt to use a grappling hook to avoid the waters of the tropical Turtle Island circuit, we realized that *LittleBigPlanet Karting* truly is built from *LBP's* DNA, and isn't simply an extension in name and look alone.

The Current Events battle stage showed another side of the campaign, with an interior weapon-centric skirmish amidst electrified floor panels, but expectedly, *LittleBigPlanet Karting* is more than just a typical kart-driving affair. It's an ample creation (and sharing) suite as well, which builds off of the tools of *LBP2* but takes them into full 3D, adding the ability to move the camera to enable various playstyles—such as in Monster Trucks, a top-down stage in which a robotic dinosaur heaves fireballs at tiny vehicles in a colorful city.

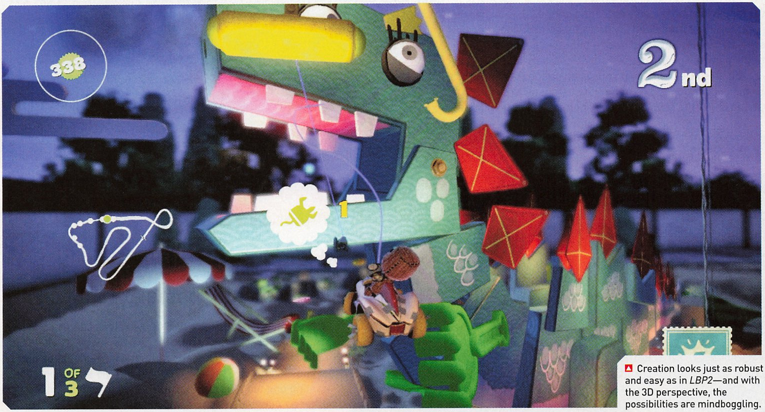
Matched with the ability to alter the A.I. mechanics, create new weapons and flying vehicles, and design storylines, it's clear that we'll be doing much more than swapping rockets around cute courses once *LittleBigPlanet Karting*'s community starts dreaming up unique new experiences. **ANDREW HAYWARD**



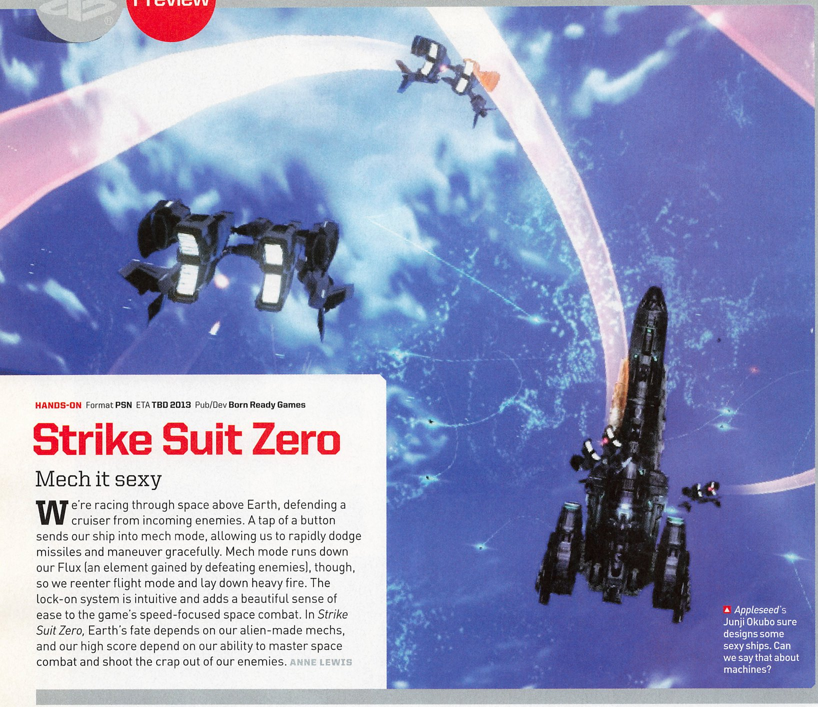
The game's definition of "kart" may differ from our own.

Tossing mines at TNT boxes is never *not* a good idea.

The traditional racing action is pretty good, but *LBP Karting* offers so much more.



Creation looks just as robust and easy as in *LBP2*—and with the 3D perspective, the possibilities are mindboggling.



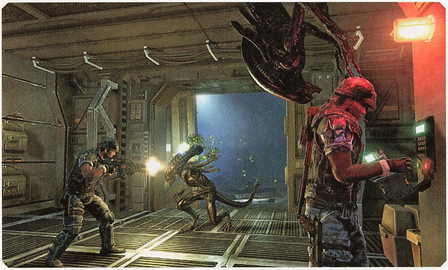
HANDS-ON Format **PSN** ETA **TBD 2013** Pub/Dev **Born Ready Games**

Strike Suit Zero

Mech it sexy

We're racing through space above Earth, defending a cruiser from incoming enemies. A tap of a button sends our ship into mech mode, allowing us to rapidly dodge missiles and maneuver gracefully. Mech mode runs down our Flux (an element gained by defeating enemies), though, so we reenter flight mode and lay down heavy fire. The lock-on system is intuitive and adds a beautiful sense of ease to the game's speed-focused space combat. In *Strike Suit Zero,* Earth's fate depends on our alien-made mechs, and our high score depend on our ability to master space combat and shoot the crap out of our enemies. ANNE LEWIS

▲ *Appleseed*'s Junji Okubo sure designs some sexy ships. Can we say that about machines?



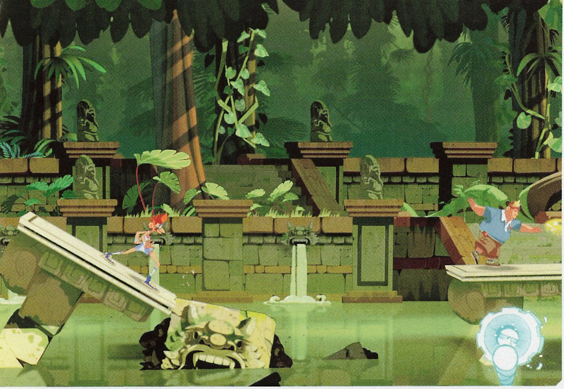
HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **February 2013** Pub **SEGA** Dev **Gearbox Software**

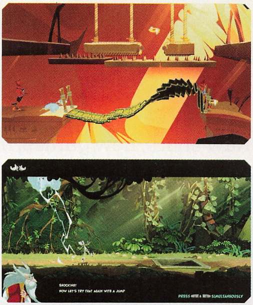
Aliens
Colonial Marines

They mostly come at night...

We have a confession: we secretly love *Left 4 Dead*, even though it's never come to PS3. Lucky for us, *Aliens: Colonial Marines'* new Escape multiplayer mode takes plenty of cues from Valve's panic-inducing zombie shoot-'em-up, casting one team as classic, gun-toting marines and the other as *Aliens'* deadly Xenomorphs.

The marines must navigate a linear path and accomplish simple objectives, while the Xenomorph team basically





△ Angels have a lot of abilities at their disposal. Good thing there's a tutorial.

HANDS-ON Format **PSN** ETA **Q1 2013** Pub/Dev **Moon Spider Studio**

Harold

Who says cheaters never prosper?

It's not immediately obvious from the screenshots, but *Harold* is a racing game—and it's one in which we don't play as the title character. Instead, *Harold* unfolds from the point of view of a guardian angel in training, who (being exceptionally lazy) shows up late to his final exam—helping a human win a footrace—and gets stuck with the absolute worst runner, a gawky dork named Harold.

Harold has untapped talents, but they need the right motivation, meaning we'll have to pull out as many underhanded angel tricks as we can. Lightning bolts will make him jump obstacles or give him a burst of speed, and we can manipulate the scenery to help Harold negotiate a broad assortment of environmental hazards and other death traps—while jumping ahead to ensure that his opponents fall into them. So long as Harold finishes third or better, we'll get to progress—but to *really* win takes a combination of speedy reflexes and intricate knowledge of the track. If we're lucky, we might even find each stage's hidden shortcut, complete with an elaborate animated cutscene.

Actually, animation may be *Harold*'s biggest draw. Lavishly, unapologetically 2D, *Harold* features the talents of animators who've worked with Disney, Don Bluth, and Studio Ghibli—and it shows, as Harold and his world are vibrantly detailed and beautifully realized. The gameplay takes a little getting used to, but *Harold*'s uniqueness makes it hard to ignore. **MIKEL REPARAZ**

Dev Talk

"When you start to get the game, the sensation is really close to *WipEout* and *Guitar Hero*; when you get the level and know it by heart, it's just a question of rhythm. You go to the next obstacle, you prepare it, you can sabotage somebody, you go back and use turbo. It's like a dance, like boom boom boom."

Loris Malek
CEO of Moon Spider

wreaks as much havoc as possible, spitting acid from a distance or slashing stomachs from up close, depending on players' chosen classes. While the aliens enjoy infinite respawns, the humans must constantly revive fallen squadmates or it's game over, man. Oh, and there's a time limit. Yikes.

Though we sadly weren't given an opportunity to try out the Xenomorph side, we did attempt to guide a four-man team of marines to an extraction point. The level contained a handful of safe zones and special weapons like flamethrowers, which helped keep the momentum manageable and the gameplay varied, respectively. Unfortunately, that wasn't enough to keep our squad alive. We blame our lack of communication. Still, Escape should be a welcome complement to the larger campaign (and maybe even a worthy substitute for *Left 4 Dead*). **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

Where the hell is...

Brothers in Arms: Furious 4? (Ubisoft)

The over-the-top WWII shooter is still on its way, but it's being retooled into something new—and unrelated to the more serious *Brothers in Arms* series.

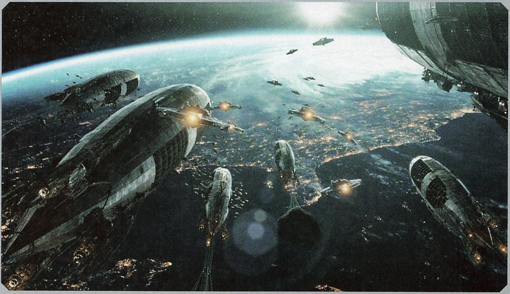
The latest on...

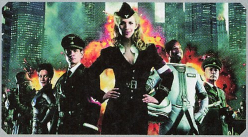
New shots, new games, new info

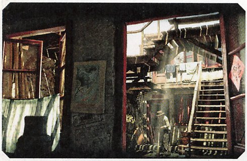
Iron Sky: Invasion

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD**
Pub **TopWare Interactive** Dev **Reality Pump**

We never thought we'd be able to type the words "Moon Nazis attack earth" in this magazine, and yet here we are. This movie tie-in is a space-simulation game that puts us in the cockpit of a space fighter defending earth from the incoming Moon Nazi invasion. Space combat, political strategy, and Nazis are what *Iron Sky: Invasion* offers, and as bizarre as the premise is, we're almost as excited for this game as we are for the darkly comedic movie. But the game will be hitting PC first and there are scant details on when the PS3 port will arrive in the U.S. at this point.



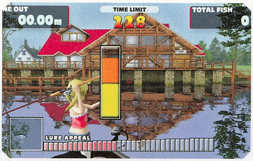




Whore of the Orient

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.**
Dev **KMM Interactive**

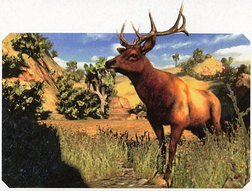
The remains of *L.A. Noire's* Team Bondi have come together to produce a new game titled *Whore of the Orient*. Set in Shanghai in 1936, it focuses on Western police trying to keep the peace in the city.



Let's Fish! Hooked On

Format **PS Vita** ETA **TBD**
Pub **Wired Productions** Dev **SIMS**

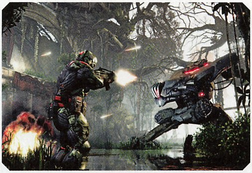
We appreciate a good fishing sim as much as the next person. We also appreciate busty anime ladies. Combine the two, and we've got *Let's Fish! Hooked On*, a fast-paced arcade adventure for Vita.



Cabela's Hunting Expeditions

Format **PS3** ETA **October**
Pub **Activision** Dev **Activision**

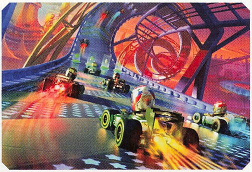
Who doesn't love murdering helpless virtual animals? *Cabela's Hunting Expeditions* is the latest in a line of simulated hunting scenarios. We can't wait to shoot a lion in the face from the safety of our couch.



Crysis 3

Format **PS3** ETA **Q2 2013**
Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **Crytek Studios**

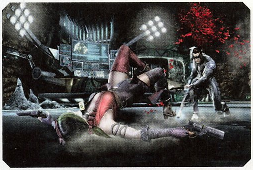
In the recently announced Hunter mode, two cloaked and overpowered players hunt down 10 normal players. The object of this multiplayer mode is to stay alive, but players who get killed become hunters as well.



F1 Race Stars

Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Codemasters**
Dev **Codemasters Studios Birmingham**

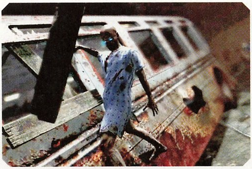
The *F1* series is known for being a hardcore racing sim, but now it's time for Formula 1 to let its hair down. *Race Stars* is an arcade-y, cartoonish romp through outlandish versions of familiar real-world tracks.



Injustice: Gods Among Us

Format **PS3** ETA **April 2013** Pub **Warner Bros. Int. Ent.**
Dev **NetherRealm Studios**

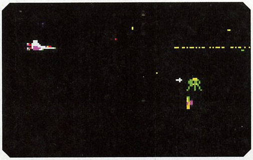
Officially announced to arrive next April, NetherRealm's latest fighting game, *Injustice: Gods Among Us* is still revealing characters for its roster. Most recently revealed was the very slinky Catwoman.



Call of Duty: Black Ops 2

Format **PS3** ETA **November**
Pub **Activision** Dev **Treyarch**

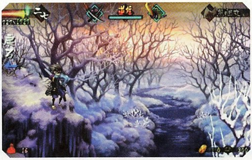
Zombies mode has been announced for *Black Ops 2*. Sure, we're not particularly surprised by this reveal (it's a no brainer—*see what we did there?*), but that doesn't make us any less excited to shoot the crap out of the undead.



Midway Arcade Origins

Format **PS3** ETA **November**
Pub **Warner Bros. Int. Ent.** Dev **Backbone Ent.**

Rampage, *Spy Hunter*, and 30 more games are coming together in one bundle. Up to four players can join in with local multiplayer, while Trophies and leaderboards mean hours of old-school fun.



Muramasa: The Demon Blade

Format **PS Vita** ETA **March 2013**
Pub **Ignition Ent.** Dev **Vanillaware**

Formerly a Wii exclusive, the very beautiful *Muramasa: The Demon Blade* is on its way to Vita. There's little information on how touch controls will be utilized in the 2D action-RPG, but we're thrilled it's coming just the same.

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲ Toll Free

Some men (and women) just want to play *Gotham City Imposters* for free. Now they can.

▲ Age Before Beauty

Dragon Age III: Inquisition has been announced for late 2013. It will use Frostbite 2 technology.

▲ Heart Stirring

A *Kingdom Hearts* HD collection is in the works, but no word yet on a U.S. release.

▼ Gone Fishing

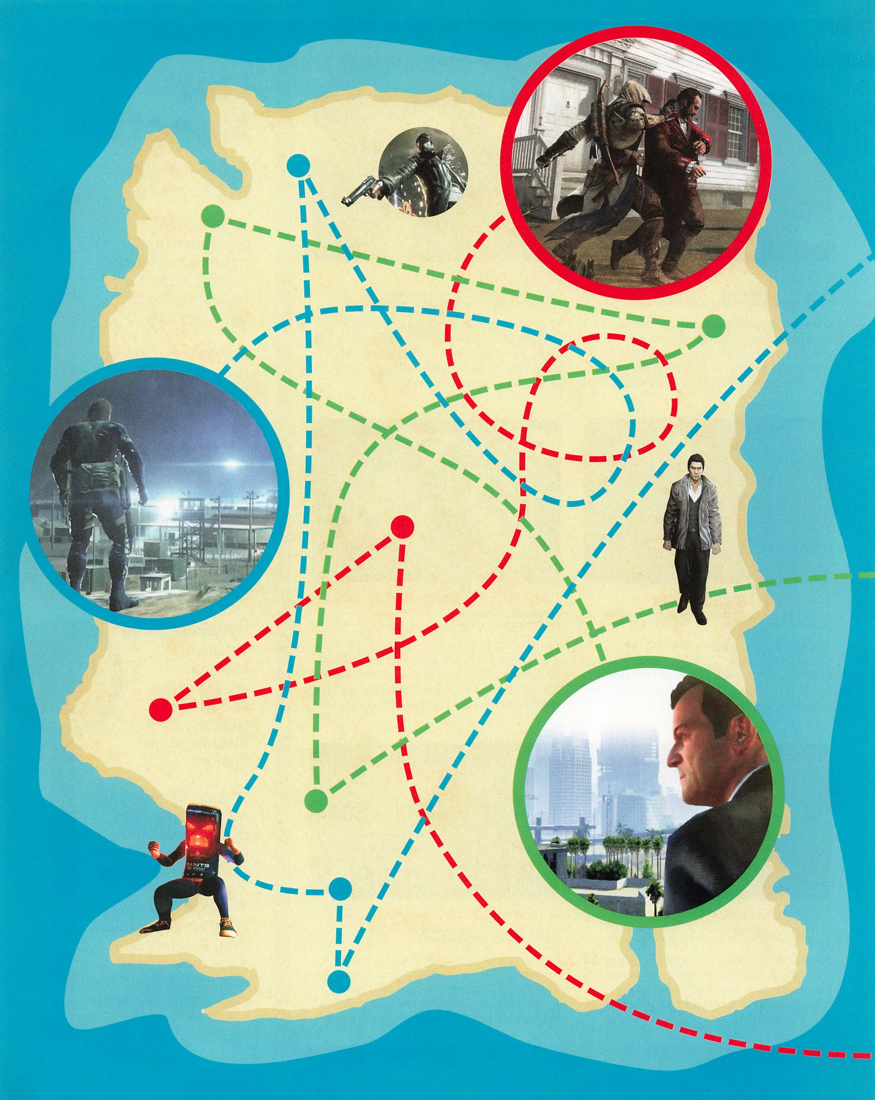
Tetsuya Mizuguchi—creator of *Rez* and *Lumines*—says he's done making games... for now.

▼ Soul Wrenching

Soul Sacrifice has been delayed in Japan until 2013. There's no U.S. release window.

▼ Mass Letdown

BioWare co-founders Greg Zeschuk and Ray Muzyka have announced their retirement. We weep.


SAINTS ROW

THE OPEN-WORLD ISSUE!

OPEN SEASON

Whether it's platformers, fighting games, first-person shooters… It seems most every genre has its moment in the spotlight. But with high-profile franchises like *Metal Gear Solid*, *Grand Theft Auto*, and *Assassin's Creed* set to crowd the proverbial sandbox, the open-world genre's era is officially upon us. With so many great games on the way, it's best we keep our options open.

METAL GEAR SOLID GROUND ZEROES

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Konami** Dev **Kojima Productions**

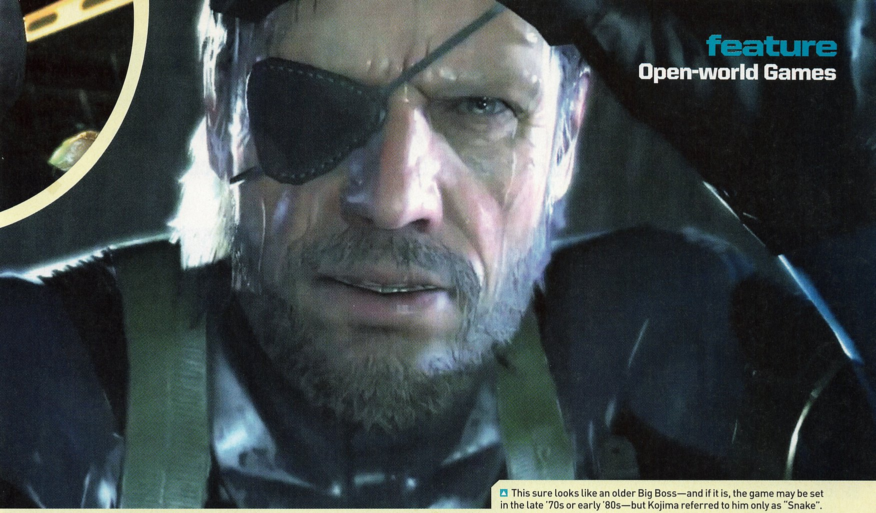
At an exclusive *Metal Gear* 25th Anniversary press conference and party in Tokyo's swanky Midtown complex, Hideo Kojima took to the stage to announce a raft of new developments—the *Metal Gear* movie, smartphone game *MGS: Social Ops*, a cracking *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* boss fight against a Metal Gear RAY, and a range of new *Metal Gear Solid* merchandise. Then, just as the show appeared to be over, Kojima announced: "Making the impossible possible: that is the soul of Kojima Productions. And now I'd like to give you a glimpse of the future of Koji Pro: Fox Engine."

The next installment of the mega-franchise is coming and entering a brave new open-world

Under tight security—no photos, no filming, no tweeting, enforced by black-clad Konami staff thronging the room—the world's first unveiling of the *Metal Gear Solid: Ground Zeroes* demo graced the screens. It revealed a free-roaming open world. A game with no game overs. Groundbreaking visuals running in real-time on "current-gen" tech. The return of Snake. Yes, *Metal Gear Solid* is back.

Fantastic Fox

So what does this mean for the franchise? Well, the obvious first point is Fox Engine. The game looks stunning from every angle. Kojima's vivid imagination is brought to thrilling reality with Fox Engine, creating a world as striking today as the *MGS2* demo was back in 2000. Rain falls heavily, bouncing off surfaces, streaking across faces in



▲ This sure looks like an older Big Boss—and if it is, the game may be set in the late '70s or early '80s—but Kojima referred to him only as "Snake".

rivulets, soaking into clothing, drizzling from Big Boss'(?) scraggly beard. As an XOF chopper takes off, its blades throw the rain in wide ripples.

The nature of the XOF organization is just one of the questions raised by the demo. Chico and Paz return from PSP's *MGS: Peace Walker*, but why does the young boy—possibly Chico—have a hole in his chest? What year is this? Why does Kojima Productions' art show a young Snake, while the demo apparently features an aged Big Boss? Answers will have to wait a while, because as the camera cuts from the XOF choppers down to the ocean and then up the cliff face, we learn that Kojima has abandoned the linear nature of *Metal Gear* and created an open-world sneaking playground for us to traverse as we like.

"Because this is an open world, you can choose whatever route you like to infiltrate this camp," says Kojima, as Big Boss (well, officially so far it's just Snake) approaches Camp Omega, where his mission is to extract Paz and Chico, the young *Militaires Sans Frontières* allies from *Peace Walker*. "Usually in a *Metal Gear* game, around now there would be some enemies to sneak past, but this is less that kind of puzzle game. It's more a real-time sneaking game."

Snake crawls along as he has always done, using similar crouching and crawling motions to those of Old Snake in *MGS4*, but more graceful and fluid. Searchlights flood the ground ahead with light, just as when Solid Snake first infiltrated the compound on Shadow Moses Island in 1998's *Metal Gear Solid*, but here the effect is much more subtle—when the light nearly hits Snake, he's not immediately seen, and a quick roll hides him just quickly enough to avoid detection. "This is what I'd hoped to do with the first *MGS*, actually," says Kojima.

Generation Now

According to Kojima, the gameplay footage displayed onscreen was running on a PC capped to PS3 specs. That seems impossible, doesn't it? Can PS3 really handle *Ground Zeroes*? "This is not just a tech demo," stressed Kojima. "I'm not sure yet when the game will be released; we could make a linear game much more easily, but I wanted to set this game in an open world. I don't think you'll be waiting too long, but we're not going to release it until it's ready." If it follows the same development timeline as *Metal Gear Solid 3*—a game which only hit PS2 because Kojima was frustrated waiting for PS3 and 360—we could see it as soon as November 2013, running on current-generation platforms.

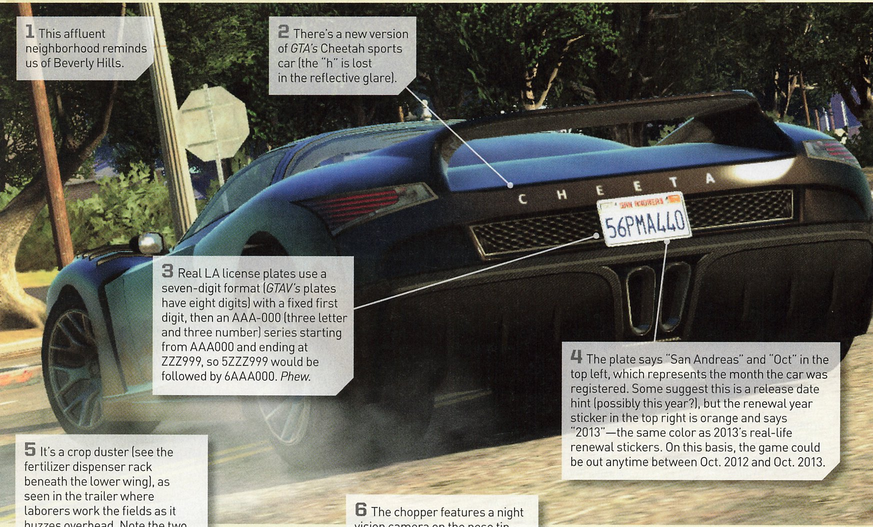
Wouldn't it be cool if...

We could infiltrate a high-security weapons manufacturing facility and steal a Metal Gear? Time for a little payback to the Military-Industrial Complex!

GRAND THEFT AUTO V

Rockstar remains infuriatingly vague about GTA's return. We scour the latest screenshots for new evidence.

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Rockstar Games** Dev **Rockstar North**

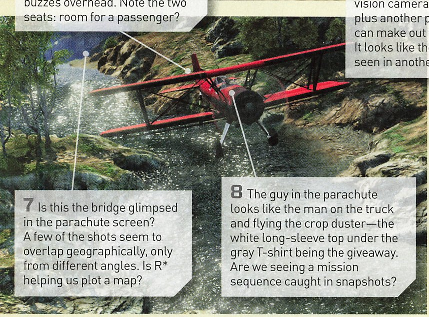


1 This affluent neighborhood reminds us of Beverly Hills.

2 There's a new version of *GTA's* Cheetah sports car (the "h" is lost in the reflective glare).

3 Real LA license plates use a seven-digit format (*GTAV's* plates have eight digits) with a fixed first digit, then an AAA-000 (three letter and three number) series starting from AAA000 and ending at ZZZ999, so 5ZZZ999 would be followed by 6AAA000. *Phew.*

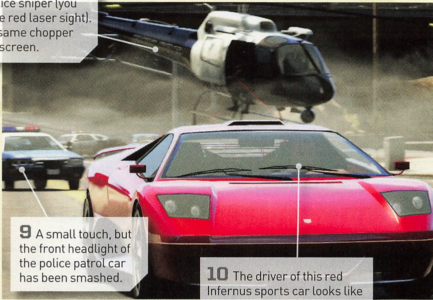
4 The plate says "San Andreas" and "Oct" in the top left, which represents the month the car was registered. Some suggest this is a release date hint (possibly this year?), but the renewal year sticker in the top right is orange and says "2013"—the same color as 2013's real-life renewal stickers. On this basis, the game could be out anytime between Oct. 2012 and Oct. 2013.



5 It's a crop duster (see the fertilizer dispenser rack beneath the lower wing), as seen in the trailer where laborers work the fields as it buzzes overhead. Note the two seats: room for a passenger?

7 Is this the bridge glimpsed in the parachute screen? A few of the shots seem to overlap geographically, only from different angles. Is R* helping us plot a map?

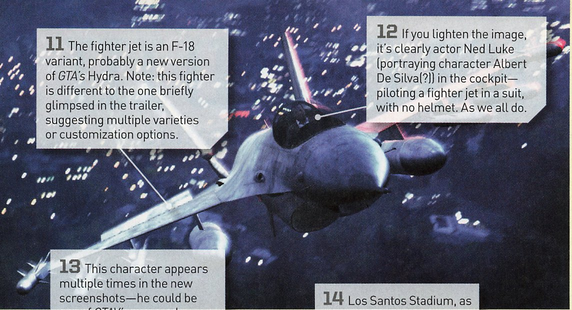
8 The guy in the parachute looks like the man on the truck and flying the crop duster—the white long-sleeve top under the gray T-shirt being the giveaway. Are we seeing a mission sequence caught in snapshots?



6 The chopper features a night vision camera on the nose tip, plus another police sniper (you can make out the red laser sight). It looks like the same chopper seen in another screen.

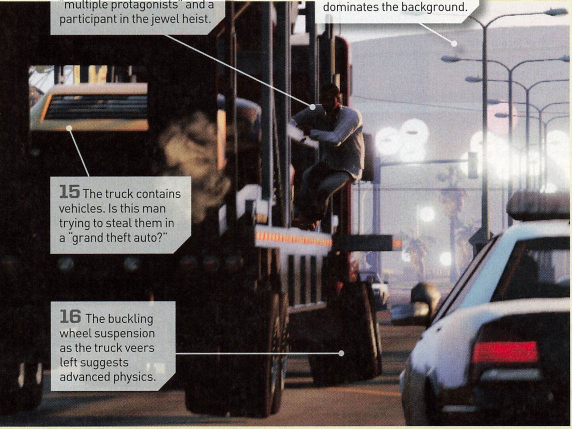
9 A small touch, but the front headlight of the police patrol car has been smashed.

10 The driver of this red Infernus sports car looks like one of the men from the first game trailer's jewel heist.



11 The fighter jet is an F-18 variant, probably a new version of *GTA's* Hydra. Note: this fighter is different to the one briefly glimpsed in the trailer, suggesting multiple varieties or customization options.

12 If you lighten the image, it's clearly actor Ned Luke (portraying character Albert De Silva(?)) in the cockpit—piloting a fighter jet in a suit, with no helmet. As we all do.

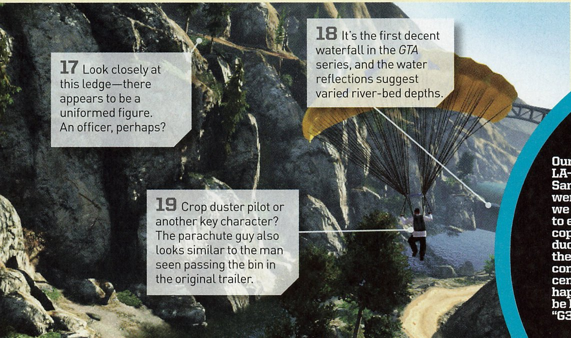


13 This character appears multiple times in the new screenshots—he could be one of *GTAV's* rumored "multiple protagonists" and a participant in the jewel heist.

14 Los Santos Stadium, as seen in *GTA: San Andreas*, dominates the background.

15 The truck contains vehicles. Is this man trying to steal them in a "grand theft auto?"

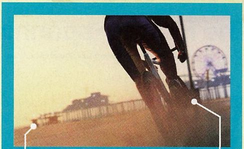
16 The buckling wheel suspension as the truck veers left suggests advanced physics.



17 Look closely at this ledge—there appears to be a uniformed figure. An officer, perhaps?

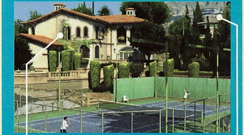
18 It's the first decent waterfall in the *GTA* series, and the water reflections suggest varied river-bed depths.

19 Crop duster pilot or another key character? The parachute guy also looks similar to the man seen passing the bin in the original trailer.



20 Pleasure Pier in Santa Monica, also glimpsed in a banner at "Muscle Beach" during the game trailers as joggers ran past.

21 The rider is on a racing bike (note his feet attached to the pedals), with obvious gameplay implications.



22 Look at that, an open window—and it's not a flat texture. Can we go in?

23 A playable tennis minigame seems highly likely, especially given Rockstar's work with Table Tennis and the requisite physics—the games are powered by iterations of the same RAGE engine tech.

24 Is this Madd Dogg's mansion from *GTA: San Andreas*? They look similar.

25 Dirt bike races seem like a given, but the variety of colorful outfits suggests more extensive customization could be in the cards.

Wouldn't it be cool if...

Our downtown LA–er, Los Santos–heist went awry and we were forced to evade the cops by ducking into the nearby convention center, which happened to be hosting the "G3" Expo?

NEVER STOP PLAYING.

ASSASSIN'S CREED III

The history-spanning secret war goes back to nature

Format **PS3** ETA **October 30** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Ubisoft Montreal**

We've known for a while that *Assassin's Creed III* is going to be considerably bigger and more ambitious than its predecessors, with overhauled combat and exploration systems and a focus on big, open stretches of wilderness. If our final pre-release look at the game is anything to go by, however, it's also going to be a sprawling epic on the order of *Red Dead Redemption* or *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, one to which we'll lose countless hours pursuing side-missions, collecting hidden trinkets in out-of-the-way towns, hunting animals across beautiful, hazard-filled countryside, and—of course—re-enacting historical events alongside famous people, like some kind of incredibly dangerous Forrest Gump.

A big, recently revealed part of the experience is the Davenport Homestead, a stately manor built in a remote patch of forest that becomes protagonist Connor's home base (and is also home to his apparent mentor, Achilles). Much like *ACII's* Monteriggioni, this is a place we'll build up over the course of the game—but where Monteriggioni was a depressed village in need of renovation, Davenport is a town we'll gradually build up from nothing, recruiting new citizens and tradesmen through missions that see us rescuing them from

Connor's extralegal activities mean he can run afoul of *any* authority figure—not just the ones wearing red coats.

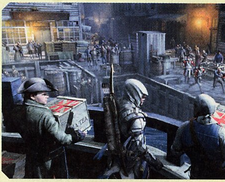
bandits or driving off poachers.

Of course, we'll also be able to recruit disgruntled citizens to the Assassin Brotherhood—who appear to have considerably more personality than their *Brotherhood* and *Revelations* counterparts. We've seen one so far, in the game's sixth Sequence: a volatile French Canadian named Stephane Chapheau, who we save from a brawl with English tax collectors. Later, we find out that he works with revolutionaries Sam Adams and William Molineux, and he leads us (and a growing mob) through the streets toward the docks—shouting at Redcoat patrols with every step and forcing us to end the fights he starts. But he only becomes ours once we order him to assassinate a lackey of Templar villain William Johnson (who, incidentally, is also trying to buy Connor's home village out from under its Mohawk residents). And when the Boston Tea Party eventually erupts—giving us a chance to hurl crates of tea into the harbor while simultaneously protecting Molineux and Paul Revere—Chapheau is right there alongside us, hacking down Redcoat guards with a meat cleaver as they try to intervene.

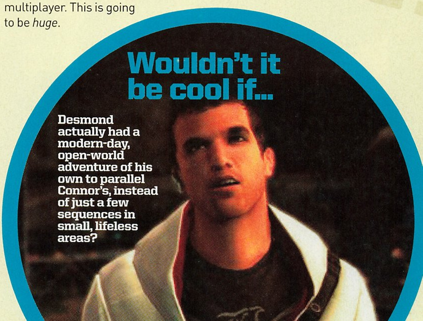
The fighting in *ACIII* has also been completely retooled. More freeform than previous *Creeds*, combat sees Connor brutally whirling into his foes with his tomahawk and Hidden Blades (which, in direct combat, are now *extremely* messy weapons, with kills requiring repeated stabs into our foes' increasingly bloody chests and necks). Countering now requires a quick press of the Circle button, after which time slows and we're prompted to either try and disarm our enemy or simply throw them, and ranged weapons—including muskets scavenged from enemies—can be used at any time during combos. It's a huge change from simply locking on to our enemies and counter-slashing them to death, and while it's gratifyingly vicious, longtime fans may actually have to retrain themselves a bit.

Even in the few short hours we played it, it was clear there's much more to *ACIII* than Boston, Davenport, and the wilderness; wandering through the game's frontier (a vast untamed hub that links the game's other areas), we stumbled into the little town of Lexington, where we stealth-murdered an unsuspecting British patrol and tried out the adorable "pet animal" command on the local livestock. Later, we traded trinkets with an old sailor for clues to Captain Kidd's treasure and sailed off to pursue privateer missions along the East Coast—which mostly involve fast-traveling to self-contained aquatic areas to blow up enemy armadas and/or escort friendly ships through danger.

As full of activity as our brief hands-on was, it's painfully obvious we've only scratched the surface—and that's not even counting the addictively badass multiplayer. This is going to be *huge*.



Wouldn't it be cool if...



Desmond actually had a modern-day, open-world adventure of his own to parallel Connor's, instead of just a few sequences in small, lifeless areas?

Wouldn't it be cool if...

Wandering around the game's fictional version of Tokyo's Shinjuku district (Kamurocho) revealed a surprise peek of *Jet Set Radio* skaters zipping about and tagging the surroundings?

YAKUZA 5

Will crime finally pay in Sega's largest entry to date?

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2013** Pub **Sega** Dev **Sega**

Last we saw of Sega's open-world gangster saga, it was dabbling in a zombie-infested spin-off as *Yakuza: Dead Souls*, but the next iteration picks back up where 2011's *Yakuza 4* left off—and does so with a brand new engine that amplifies the amount of detail seen in both the virtual representation of Japan and its expressive characters. Keeping with its numerical theme, the massive *Yakuza 5* features five cities based on their real-life counterparts, and even has five playable leads to choose from.

In addition to three heroes from past entries, we can take the role of young ward Haruka Sawamura, who aims to become an idol and has her own dance battle sequences, as well as Tatsuo Shinada, a former baseball player who was kicked out of the game for gambling.

Expect a familiar mix of drama and action like that of the previous games with tweaks to the controls and combat systems, but on a much larger scale, thanks to the significant increase in territory to roam and explore.

WATCH DOGS

An ambitious ode to the terrors of technology

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2013** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Ubisoft Montreal**

Hacking is the core component of Ubisoft's latest open-world creation, *Watch Dogs*, in which protagonist Aiden Pearce is capable of some serious on-the-fly techno-wizardry. He can peer into nearby cell phones with his own device, finding out deeply personal details and crucial information, and can even jam surrounding handsets to distract guards and others. In much more dramatic fashion, he can also manipulate traffic lights and bridge signals to cause crashes or escape pursuers, but those are just a couple of the myriad ways

SAINTS ROW 4

SAINTS FLOW

Another bountiful feast of bad behavior is on the horizon

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2013** Pub **THQ** Dev **Volition**

THQ initially announced plans to follow up last year's *Saints Row: The Third* with a standalone expansion—*Enter the Dominatrix*—that would've dropped about now. But when new president (and Naughty Dog co-founder) Jason Rubin took charge of the publisher earlier this year, he decided to fold that release into a tentatively titled *Saints Row 4*—which will ship sometime in 2013 and take on a much larger scope than originally intended for the expansion.

Rubin initially expressed displeasure at *The Third's* vulgar tone (which he thought limited the scope of its audience), but he's since backtracked, telling website Eurogamer that the next entry will be "even more over the top"—probably for the best, considering the immense success of the last entry.

It's unclear just how much of *Enter the Dominatrix* will remain in *Saints Row 4*, but the expansion promised an absurd tale in which a powerful alien named Zinyak enslaves the Saints' leader, forcing him to play through a virtual-reality version of Steelport. Considering how amazingly well *Saints Row: The Third* nailed its gonzo open-world concept, we have complete faith that developer Volition will thoroughly entertain us once more.

Wouldn't it be cool if...

Volition's Geo-Mod destruction tech (from *Red Faction*) let us bash through walls and other structures with lasting results? It'd be a huge, but potentially satisfying addition.

Wouldn't it be cool if...

We could adopt someone else's identity by hacking into their digital accounts, and then use that persona to gain access to restricted areas? See? Identity theft can be fun!

Pearce can alter the world around him in Chicago and, reportedly, other real-world cities. Most sandbox games focus on the physical world around the player. *Watch Dogs* maintains that familiar third-person action approach, but layers the surrounding digital world on top of that, giving us the tools to use city-monitoring surveillance computers to gain the upper hand against enemies. Add in melee combat, gunplay, and some seriously impressive visuals and *Watch Dogs* looks very much like a next-generation affair—only we'll be playing it on PS3 come next year.

Open-world Wish List

More great open-world franchises just begging for sequels

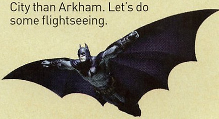
Red Dead Redemption
The Old West has a lot more territory to explore, and cowboys love to wander...

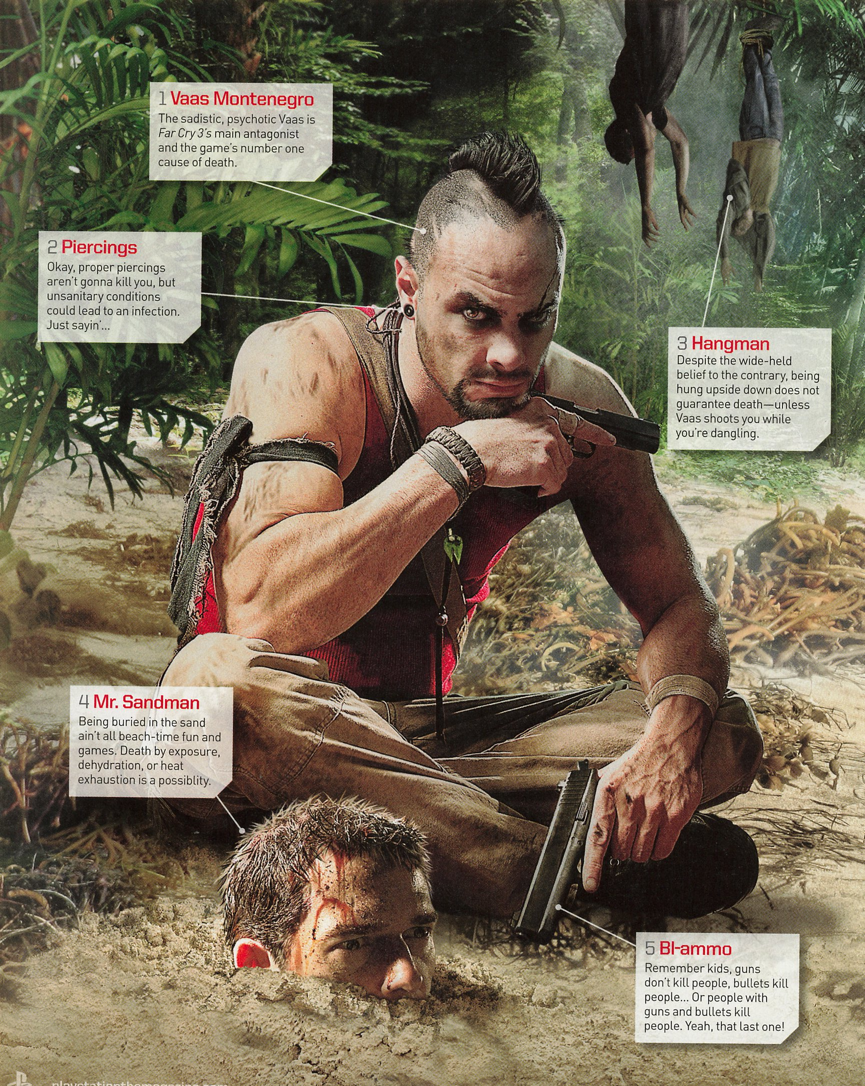
inFamous
Empire City, New Marais... Where there's a city, there's a need for a public utility like Cole.

Just Cause
We'd love a third installment of the over-the-top spy saga, bad voice acting and all.

Fallout
We long to return to the post-apocalypse, but let's leave the *New Vegas* bugs behind.

Batman
There's a lot more to Gotham City than Arkham. Let's do some flightseeing.





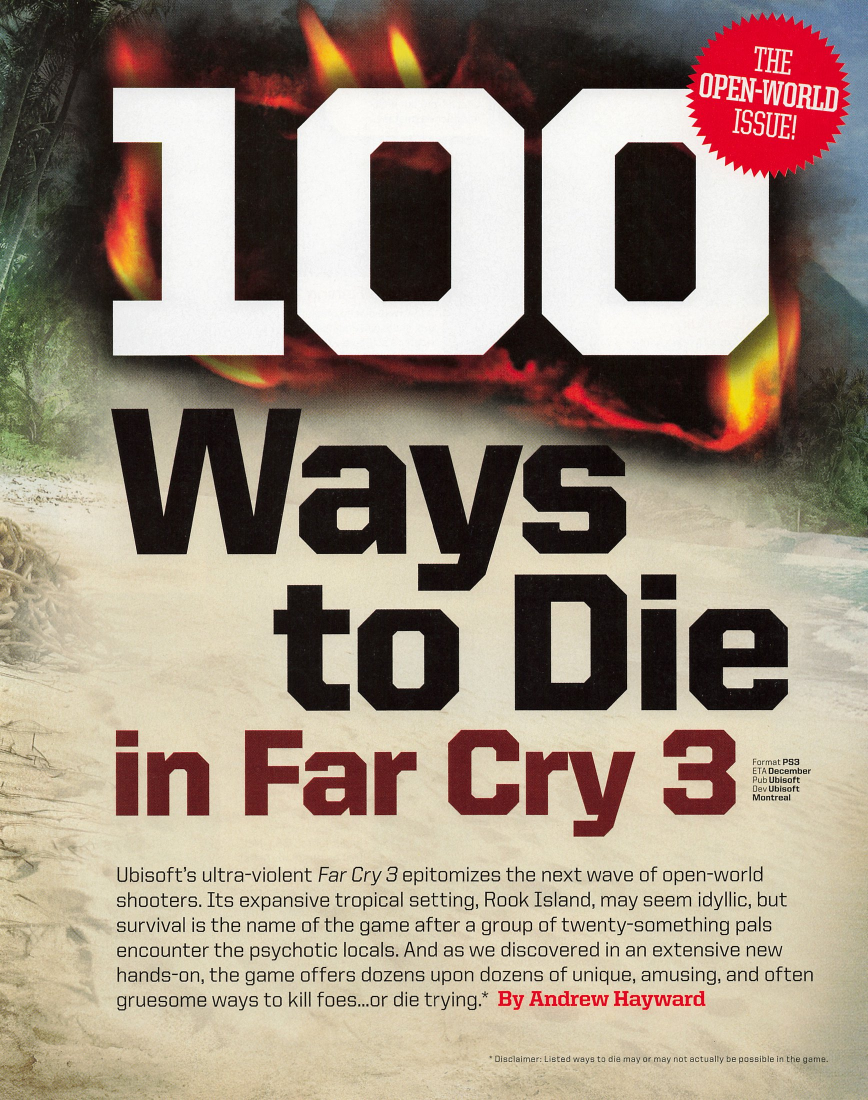
1 Vaas Montenegro
The sadistic, psychotic Vaas is *Far Cry 3's* main antagonist and the game's number one cause of death.

2 Piercings
Okay, proper piercings aren't gonna kill you, but unsanitary conditions could lead to an infection. Just sayin'...

3 Hangman
Despite the wide-held belief to the contrary, being hung upside down does not guarantee death—unless Vaas shoots you while you're dangling.

4 Mr. Sandman
Being buried in the sand ain't all beach-time fun and games. Death by exposure, dehydration, or heat exhaustion is a possiblity.

5 Bl-ammo
Remember kids, guns don't kill people, bullets kill people... Or people with guns and bullets kill people. Yeah, that last one!



THE OPEN-WORLD ISSUE!

100 Ways to Die in Far Cry 3

Format **PS3**
ETA **December**
Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Ubisoft Montreal**

Ubisoft's ultra-violent *Far Cry 3* epitomizes the next wave of open-world shooters. Its expansive tropical setting, Rook Island, may seem idyllic, but survival is the name of the game after a group of twenty-something pals encounter the psychotic locals. And as we discovered in an extensive new hands-on, the game offers dozens upon dozens of unique, amusing, and often gruesome ways to kill foes...or die trying.* **By Andrew Hayward**

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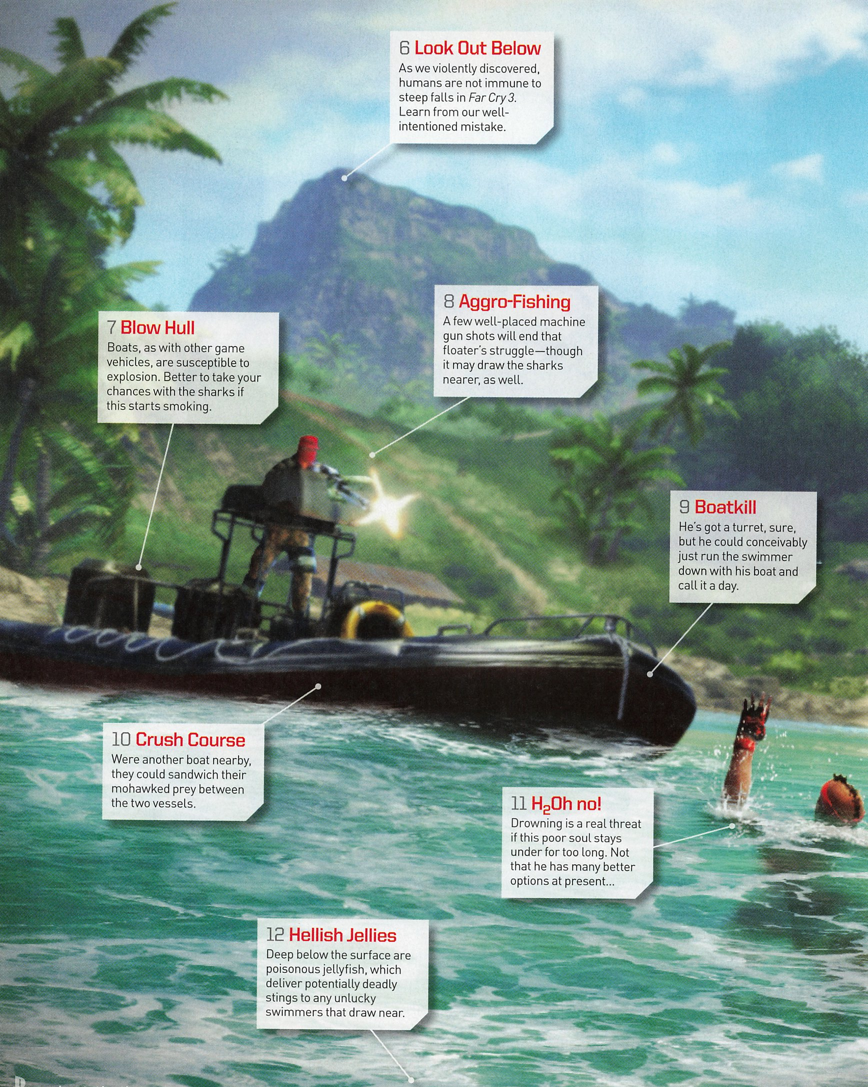
* Disclaimer: Listed ways to die may or may not actually be possible in the game.



6 Look Out Below

As we violently discovered, humans are not immune to steep falls in *Far Cry 3*. Learn from our well-intentioned mistake.

7 Blow Hull

Boats, as with other game vehicles, are susceptible to explosion. Better to take your chances with the sharks if this starts smoking.

8 Aggro-Fishing

A few well-placed machine gun shots will end that floater's struggle—though it may draw the sharks nearer, as well.

9 Boatkill

He's got a turret, sure, but he could conceivably just run the swimmer down with his boat and call it a day.

10 Crush Course

Were another boat nearby, they could sandwich their mohawked prey between the two vessels.

11 H_2Oh no!

Drowning is a real threat if this poor soul stays under for too long. Not that he has many better options at present...

12 Hellish Jellies

Deep below the surface are poisonous jellyfish, which deliver potentially deadly stings to any unlucky swimmers that draw near.

13 Time Shares

Sounds like a great idea, but annual maintenance fees are a sure ticket to an aneurysm and an early grave.

14 Bird Flu

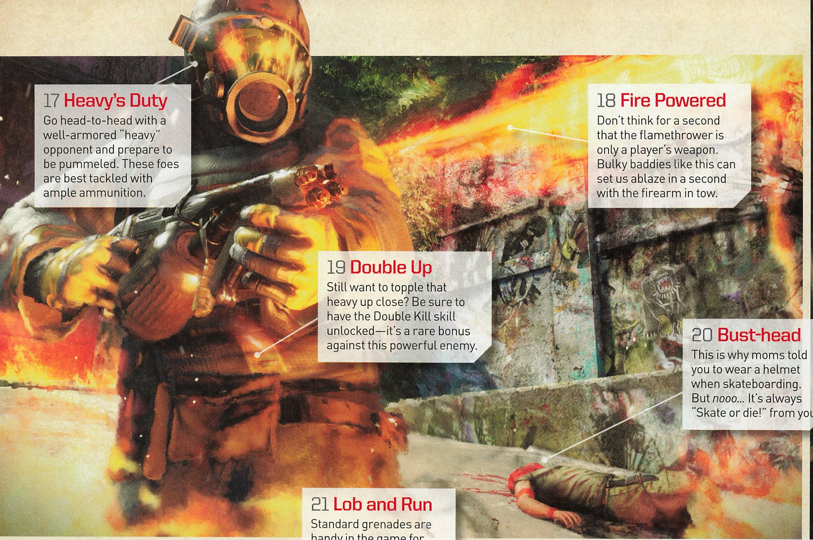
No, we're not just being paranoid germophobes! A flu pandemic is a real concern in our interconnected modern world.

15 Shark Tales

Some areas are more prone to sharks than others, but don't turn a blind eye when wading into treacherous waters.

16 Blood Brothers

Unlike *Jaws*, the sharks in *Far Cry 3* may not travel solo. Nothing like looking up from below to see a pair of them circling overhead.



17 Heavy's Duty

Go head-to-head with a well-armored "heavy" opponent and prepare to be pummeled. These foes are best tackled with ample ammunition.

18 Fire Powered

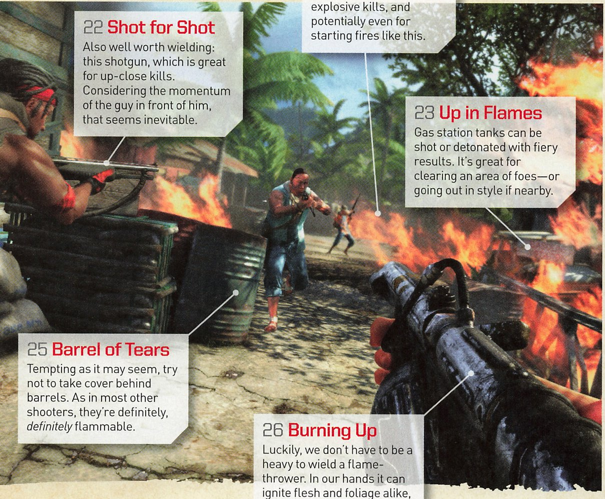
Don't think for a second that the flamethrower is only a player's weapon. Bulky baddies like this can set us ablaze in a second with the firearm in tow.

19 Double Up

Still want to topple that heavy up close? Be sure to have the Double Kill skill unlocked—it's a rare bonus against this powerful enemy.

20 Bust-head

This is why moms told you to wear a helmet when skateboarding. But *nooo*... It's always "Skate or die!" from you!



21 Lob and Run

Standard grenades are handy in the game for explosive kills, and potentially even for starting fires like this.

22 Shot for Shot

Also well worth wielding: this shotgun, which is great for up-close kills. Considering the momentum of the guy in front of him, that seems inevitable.

23 Up in Flames

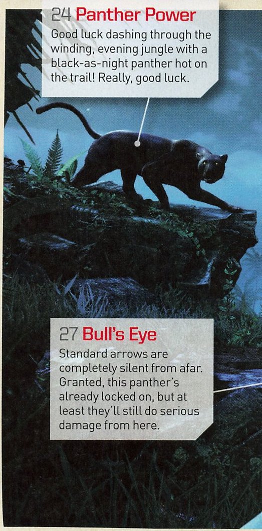
Gas station tanks can be shot or detonated with fiery results. It's great for clearing an area of foes—or going out in style if nearby.

25 Barrel of Tears

Tempting as it may seem, try not to take cover behind barrels. As in most other shooters, they're definitely, *definitely* flammable.

26 Burning Up

Luckily, we don't have to be a heavy to wield a flamethrower. In our hands it can ignite flesh and foliage alike, flushing out any hiding foes.

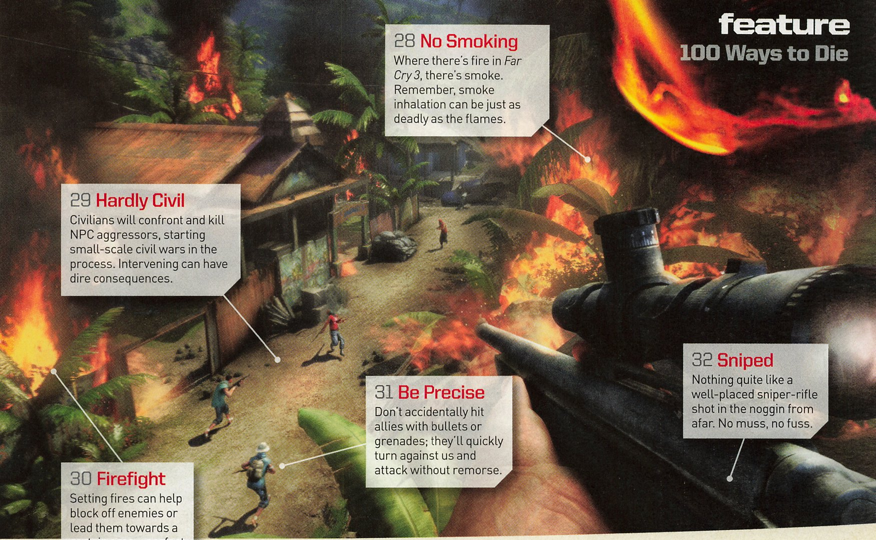


24 Panther Power

Good luck dashing through the winding, evening jungle with a black-as-night panther hot on the trail! Really, good luck.

27 Bull's Eye

Standard arrows are completely silent from afar. Granted, this panther's already locked on, but at least they'll still do serious damage from here.



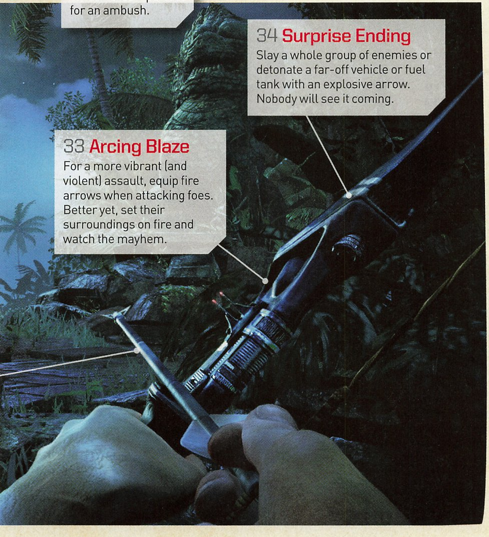
28 No Smoking
Where there's fire in *Far Cry 3*, there's smoke. Remember, smoke inhalation can be just as deadly as the flames.

29 Hardly Civil
Civilians will confront and kill NPC aggressors, starting small-scale civil wars in the process. Intervening can have dire consequences.

30 Firefight
Setting fires can help block off enemies or lead them towards a certain area—perfect for an ambush.

31 Be Precise
Don't accidentally hit allies with bullets or grenades; they'll quickly turn against us and attack without remorse.

32 Sniped
Nothing quite like a well-placed sniper-rifle shot in the noggin from afar. No muss, no fuss.



33 Arcing Blaze
For a more vibrant (and violent) assault, equip fire arrows when attacking foes. Better yet, set their surroundings on fire and watch the mayhem.

34 Surprise Ending
Slay a whole group of enemies or detonate a far-off vehicle or fuel tank with an explosive arrow. Nobody will see it coming.

Dev-ilish Minds

The creators' favorite kills

Jamie Keen, lead game designer

35 "Irritating a Cassowary, a large and terrifying flightless bird that'll attack when provoked. It's this really weird bird thing running at you, and you're like, 'Uh...'" Deadly bird taunting? We're like, "Uh..."

36 "Strap C4 to the front of a car, and then send it downhill towards an outpost and detonate it." Spectacular and efficient—we approve.

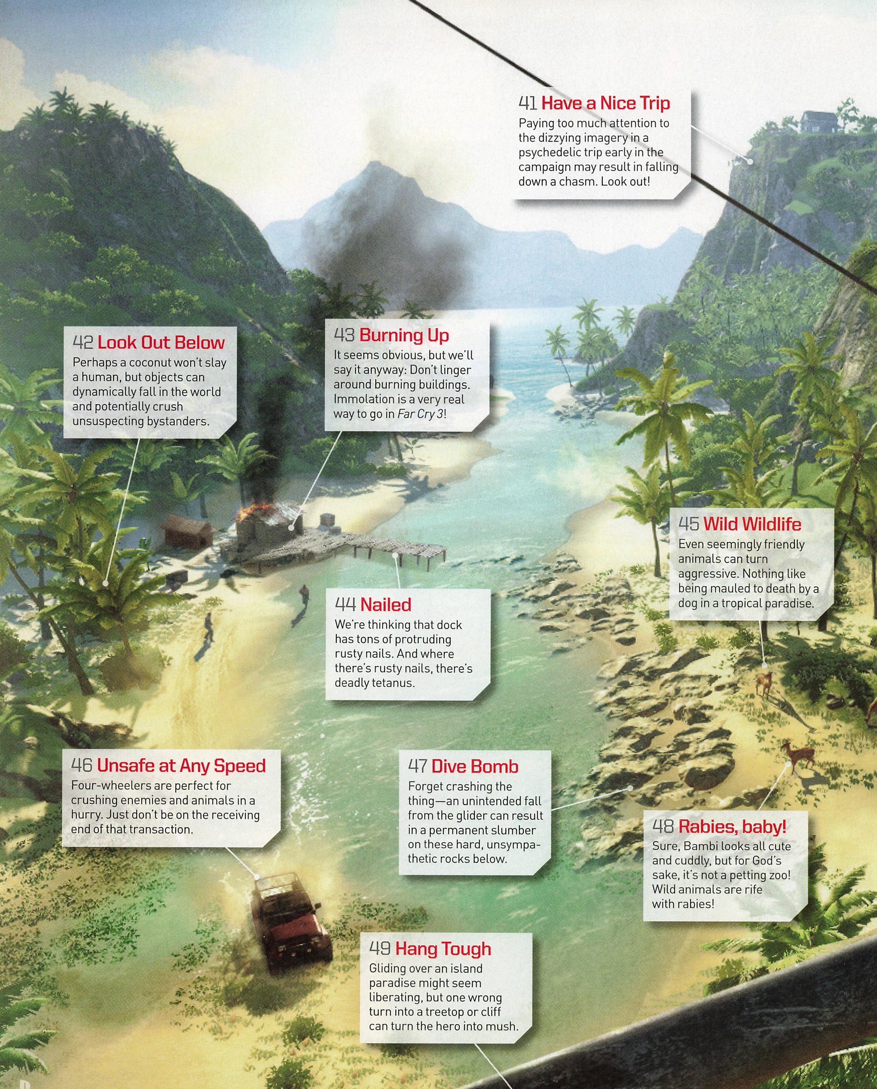
37 "Corral NPCs toward mines or C4 using the handy 'stealth grenade'—better known as a rock. People get really good with the rock. It's so weird."

Dan Hay, producer

38 "I like to take a hang glider and see if I can jump onto a tower. If I time it just right, I can, but I probably die 20 times along the way."

39 "What I like to do, which is super dangerous: I like to create a stampede with the water buffalo." Next step: trying to guide it towards a pack of foes!

40 He wouldn't elaborate further, but said it is possible to be "buried alive" in certain parts of the game. A tantalizing (and terrifying) tease, indeed.



41 Have a Nice Trip

Paying too much attention to the dizzying imagery in a psychedelic trip early in the campaign may result in falling down a chasm. Look out!

42 Look Out Below

Perhaps a coconut won't slay a human, but objects can dynamically fall in the world and potentially crush unsuspecting bystanders.

43 Burning Up

It seems obvious, but we'll say it anyway: Don't linger around burning buildings. Immolation is a very real way to go in *Far Cry 3*!

44 Nailed

We're thinking that dock has tons of protruding rusty nails. And where there's rusty nails, there's deadly tetanus.

45 Wild Wildlife

Even seemingly friendly animals can turn aggressive. Nothing like being mauled to death by a dog in a tropical paradise.

46 Unsafe at Any Speed

Four-wheelers are perfect for crushing enemies and animals in a hurry. Just don't be on the receiving end of that transaction.

47 Dive Bomb

Forget crashing the thing—an unintended fall from the glider can result in a permanent slumber on these hard, unsympathetic rocks below.

48 Rabies, baby!

Sure, Bambi looks all cute and cuddly, but for God's sake, it's not a petting zoo! Wild animals are rife with rabies!

49 Hang Tough

Gliding over an island paradise might seem liberating, but one wrong turn into a treetop or cliff can turn the hero into mush.

50 Watch the Road

Driving off of a cliff usually doesn't end well. Believe us, we tried.

51 Drown and Drive

Also, submerging a vehicle in water while inside? Not so smart. It's amusing to see the car slowly roll as things turn blurry, though.

52 Komodo Uh-Oh

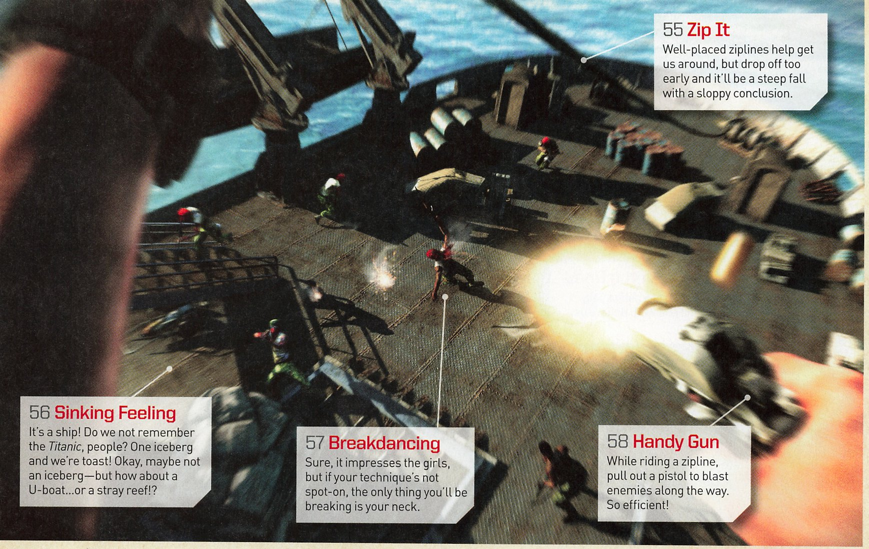
Komodo dragons lurk in unexpected areas. They like to grab on to human feet, but it can be an awfully gruesome show of interest.

53 Airline Safety

Talk all you like about how flying is safer than driving, but one stray bullet and you're gonna find out why arms aren't wings, smart guy.

54 UV Rays

You're fair-skinned.... In the tropics... Would it kill ya to wear a little sunblock? Because it might if you don't.



55 Zip It
Well-placed ziplines help get us around, but drop off too early and it'll be a steep fall with a sloppy conclusion.

56 Sinking Feeling
It's a ship! Do we not remember the *Titanic*, people? One iceberg and we're toast! Okay, maybe not an iceberg—but how about a U-boat...or a stray reef!?

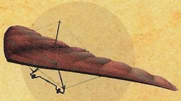
57 Breakdancing
Sure, it impresses the girls, but if your technique's not spot-on, the only thing you'll be breaking is your neck.

58 Handy Gun
While riding a zipline, pull out a pistol to blast enemies along the way. So efficient!

Vehicular Manslaughter

Some vehicles that'll leave a bloody mark on and off the island

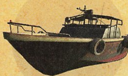
59 Buggy
Perfect for whipping through the deep jungle trails—and smashing into enemy soldiers wandering in the darkness.



60 Glider
Attach C4 to this bad boy and drop off as it dips into an enemy outpost. The fall hurts, but less than the explosion.

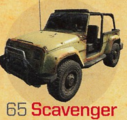
61 Jet Ski
Own the waves with this swift little ride, and dominate the opposition with an AK-47 in hand.

62 Styrus
It's old and ratty, sure, but it'll do fine ramming enemy cars off the island's numerous exposed cliffs.

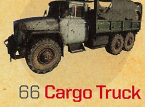


63 Patrol Boat
There's an MKG for pumping rounds into rivals, but at this size, smashing into them might do even more damage.

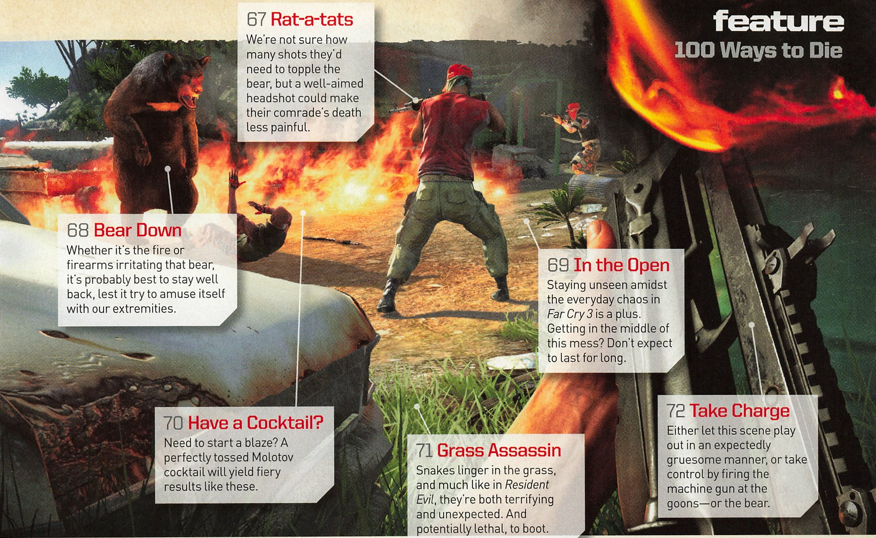
64 RHIB
The rigid-hulled inflatable boat is lightweight and fast—making it hard to evade—and it has an MKG too.



65 Scavenger
This Jeep-like ride has great offroad capabilities but take a corner faster than 15 mph and it's death by Suzuki Samurai.



66 Cargo Truck
These huge transports can smash most anything in their path and can carry a squad of heavily armed baddies.



67 Rat-a-tats

We're not sure how many shots they'd need to topple the bear, but a well-aimed headshot could make their comrade's death less painful.

68 Bear Down

Whether it's the fire or firearms irritating that bear, it's probably best to stay well back, lest it try to amuse itself with our extremities.

69 In the Open

Staying unseen amidst the everyday chaos in *Far Cry 3* is a plus. Getting in the middle of this mess? Don't expect to last for long.

70 Have a Cocktail?

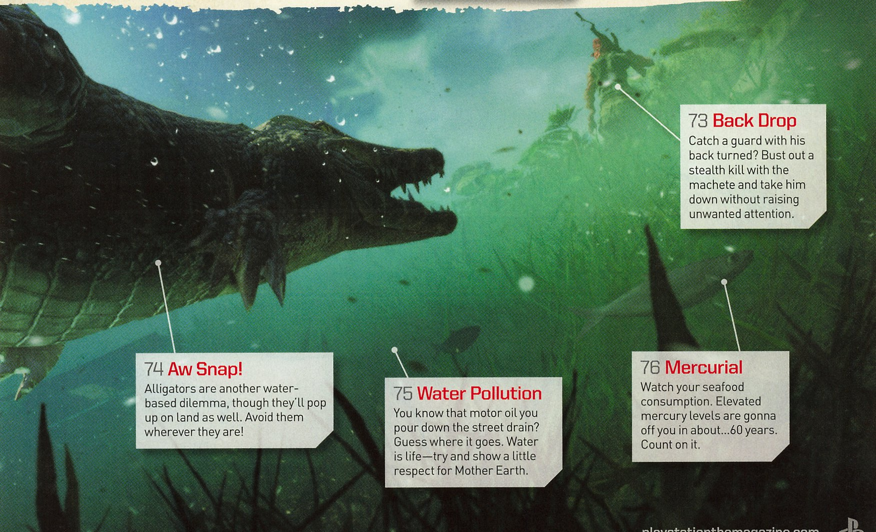
Need to start a blaze? A perfectly tossed Molotov cocktail will yield fiery results like these.

71 Grass Assassin

Snakes linger in the grass, and much like in *Resident Evil*, they're both terrifying and unexpected. And potentially lethal, to boot.

72 Take Charge

Either let this scene play out in an expectedly gruesome manner, or take control by firing the machine gun at the goons—or the bear.



73 Back Drop

Catch a guard with his back turned? Bust out a stealth kill with the machete and take him down without raising unwanted attention.

74 Aw Snap!

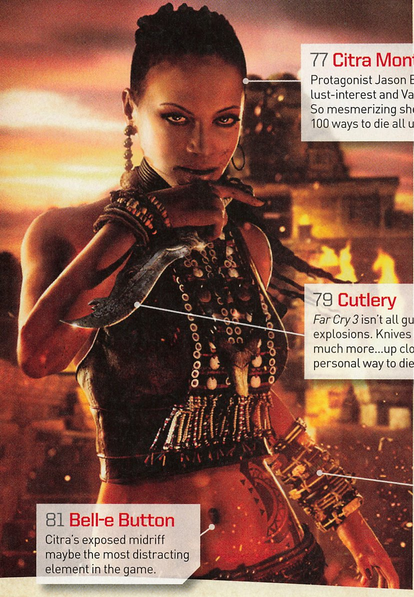
Alligators are another water-based dilemma, though they'll pop up on land as well. Avoid them wherever they are!

75 Water Pollution

You know that motor oil you pour down the street drain? Guess where it goes. Water is life—try and show a little respect for Mother Earth.

76 Mercurial

Watch your seafood consumption. Elevated mercury levels are gonna off you in about...60 years. Count on it.

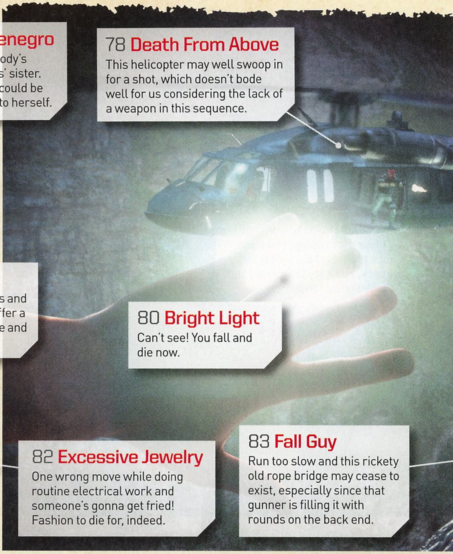


77 Citra Montenegro
Protagonist Jason Brody's lust-interest and Vaas' sister. So mesmerizing she could be 100 ways to die all unto herself.

79 Cutlery
Far Cry 3 isn't all guns and explosions. Knives offer a much more...up close and personal way to die.

81 Bell-e Button
Citra's exposed midriff maybe the most distracting element in the game.

82 Excessive Jewelry
One wrong move while doing routine electrical work and someone's gonna get fried! Fashion to die for, indeed.



78 Death From Above
This helicopter may well swoop in for a shot, which doesn't bode well for us considering the lack of a weapon in this sequence.

80 Bright Light
Can't see! You fall and die now.

83 Fall Guy
Run too slow and this rickety old rope bridge may cease to exist, especially since that gunner is filling it with rounds on the back end.

Armed & Dangerous
Far Cry's tools of the killing trade

84 AK-47
This Soviet-designed assualt rifle is a workhorse of armies, militias, and terrorists around the world. Shot capacity: 30.

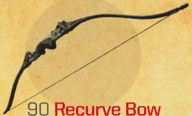
85 C4
Composition C4 is a stable, powerful, easy-to-use explosive to eliminate targets either directly or indirectly.

86 GL-94
This grenade launcher's three 43mm rounds can either be fired simultaneously or in succession.

87 Molotov
Constructing this simple incendiary explosive requires a bottle, cloth, and a flammable liquid.

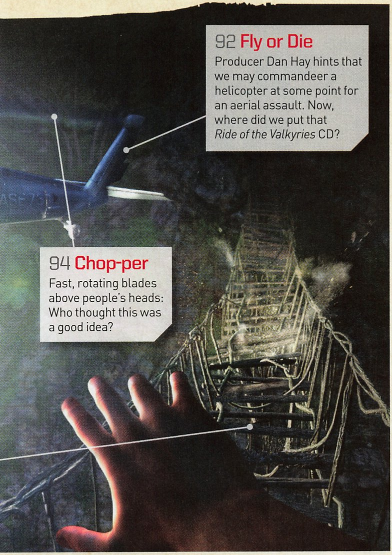
88 Mounted MKG
This Belgian light machinegun is found mounted on a number of the island's makeshift vehicles. Shot capacity: 60.

89 Z93
One shot, one kill. This powerful Yugoslavian bolt-action sniper rifle fires .50-caliber rounds. Shot capacity: 5.



90 Recurve Bow
Made of fiberglass or carbon rather than wood, the Recurve bow is durable, reliable, and offers a quiet way to kill.

91 Flamethrower
Surgeon General's warning: Never *ever* use a WWII Russian flamethrower to light a cigarette. It may cause cancer.

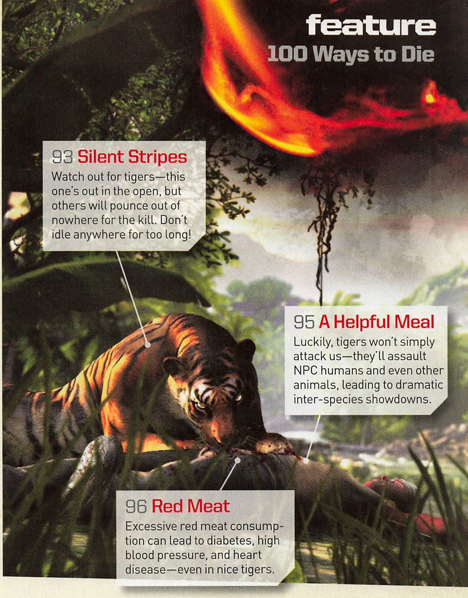


92 Fly or Die

Producer Dan Hay hints that we may commandeer a helicopter at some point for an aerial assault. Now, where did we put that *Ride of the Valkyries* CD?

94 Chop-per

Fast, rotating blades above people's heads: Who thought this was a good idea?



93 Silent Stripes

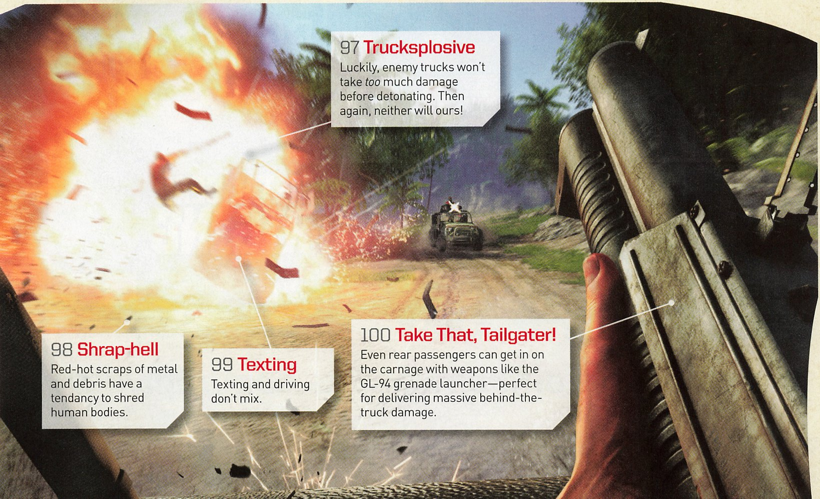
Watch out for tigers—this one's out in the open, but others will pounce out of nowhere for the kill. Don't idle anywhere for too long!

95 A Helpful Meal

Luckily, tigers won't simply attack us—they'll assault NPC humans and even other animals, leading to dramatic inter-species showdowns.

96 Red Meat

Excessive red meat consumption can lead to diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease—even in nice tigers.



97 Trucksplosive

Luckily, enemy trucks won't take *too* much damage before detonating. Then again, neither will ours!

98 Shrap-hell

Red-hot scraps of metal and debris have a tendancy to shred human bodies.

99 Texting

Texting and driving don't mix.

100 Take That, Tailgater!

Even rear passengers can get in on the carnage with weapons like the GL-94 grenade launcher—perfect for delivering massive behind-the-truck damage.

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PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

Is it okay for games to punish players for not doing well? Is this punishment more acceptable if the game is great? This is something we pondered quite a bit while playing *Dishonored* (and *XCOM*, to a certain extent). The game is good at most things, even great at some, but it makes us feel like we're bad at almost everything. Nowhere near *Dark Souls'* level of difficulty, *Dishonored* is more a test of our willpower than of our skills.

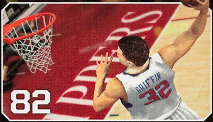
We love being challenged, but there's a difference between a game that's hard and a game that makes the player feel incompetent. However, when said game is good in so many other ways, it's hard for us to get too upset about it.

This isn't a complaint. Maybe we need more games that force us to tap into our dwindling patience. This doesn't seem to be a hugely popular trend, but it's one to keep our eyes on, because games like these will certainly continue to pop up.

Have no fear, there are still plenty of games out there for those with little desire for hardcore punishment: *Dead or Alive 5*, *Zone of the Enders HD Collection*, *LittleBigPlanet*, and pretty much any other game we review in this issue.

XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

We never knew we could feel so much for characters we never had any real interaction with. We'll miss you, Jim. You never saw that ambush coming.



NBA 2K13

It shoots. It scores! No surprises here. The *NBA 2K* series just gets better and better every year. They'll have to plateau eventually, right? Even Jordan retired...

DOKURO

Rescuing princesses is a trope with quite a bit of longevity. *Dokuro* puts a spin on the tried-and-true theme that had us simultaneously aww-ing and questioning the developers' views on the female gender.

How we score our reviews...

10 Awesome
Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.

9 Excellent
Highly recommended and a great investment.

8 Great
Wonderful yet possesses minor flaws.

7 Good
Enjoyable but with definite room for improvement.

6 Acceptable
A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Mediocre
A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Flawed
Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.

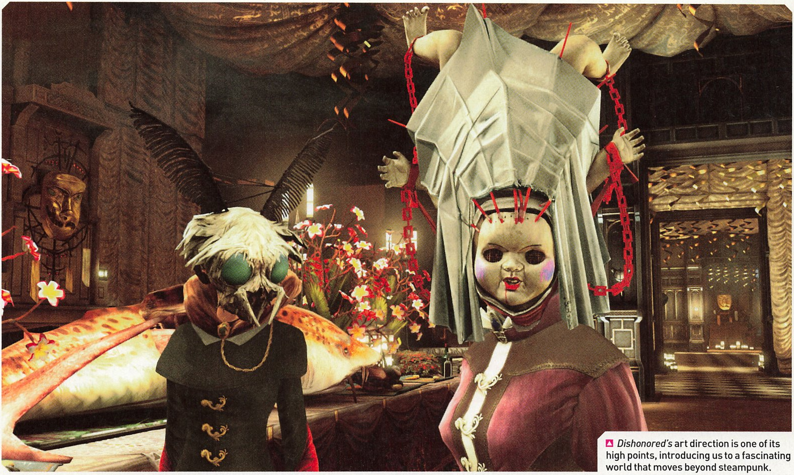
3 Poor
A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful
A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.

1 Raw Sewage
Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Our Highest Accolade
The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near-flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.



Dishonored's art direction is one of its high points, introducing us to a fascinating world that moves beyond steampunk.

Dishonored

Destroy what destroys you

Though new franchises often wear their influences on their sleeves, few games invite comparison as readily as *Dishonored*. Its basic gameplay dichotomy—which allows us to either adopt a stealthy, non-lethal approach or simply blast through the game in a violent FPS bloodbath—mirrors the recent *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*. Its open levels dotted with pacing guards feel almost like large environmental puzzles, similar to certain sections of the *Metal Gear Solid* games. And its ambient storytelling and implementation of superhuman powers very closely resembles *BioShock*—perhaps the game's most obvious inspiration.

In each case, *Dishonored* doesn't quite live up to the lofty standards set by these venerated titles, but it certainly comes close at times—an impressive feat for a first-timer. And of course, any game is more than the sum of its influences and deserves to be judged on its own merits. So while it may not be the next *BioShock* or *Metal Gear Solid*, *Dishonored's* particular blend of sneaking and slashing nonetheless provides a memorable, rewarding experience and successfully lays the groundwork for a strong new series.

True Power

While much of the game certainly does evoke knee-jerk comparisons, its world is undeniably original. Set in the fictional city of Dunwall—a once-vibrant industrial port that falls somewhere between Victorian-era London and a New England whaling town—during a time of both marvelous technological advancement and a devastating public health crisis, the universe is staggeringly and almost effortlessly rich, weaving elements of science, history, and the occult together to produce something entirely new. The aesthetic isn't quite steampunk, but with its frequent use of intricate analog mechanisms and Tesla-inspired electrical gadgets, it isn't far off.

And the leader of this fair city? A benevolent young empress who lives for maybe 15 seconds before being summarily executed in the opening scene, leaving master assassin and royal bodyguard Corvo Attano to be framed for her murder. It's pretty tough to feel any connection with a character we interacted with only briefly, so the game's heavy-handed revenge theme doesn't totally work. Still, the premise

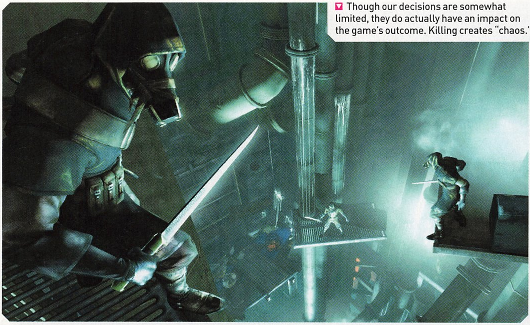
PS3
DISHONORED
M

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Bethesda Softworks **Dev** Arkane Studios **Price** $59.99 **ESRB** Mature **It's like** *BioShock* meets *Assassin's Creed* meets *Thief* meets... Well, you'll see.

Want more?

Unfortunately, *Dishonored* doesn't offer any other play modes (online or off) besides its single-player campaign—though that should last you a cool 16 to 20 hours, depending on which approach you take. Plus, with multiple ways to play, taking a second lap around the track is simply a must.



Though our decisions are somewhat limited, they do actually have an impact on the game's outcome. Killing creates "chaos."

We never ran short on health and mana potions. Maybe we should have upped the difficulty...

The game actively encourages us to operate in stealth mode.

effectively sets up a solid, straightforward plot that revolves more around political power struggles and serving justice to total scumbags anyway, so we can't complain all that much. Who doesn't like seeing corrupt politicians and repulsive clergymen get their comeuppance?

Plus, Corvo feels like a genuine badass. Though he never speaks a word, the game does an excellent job of making us feel empowered, both by affirming Corvo's reputation (the guards love to gossip about his exploits) and by literally giving him powers—four passive perks and six active abilities, including the ability to teleport across short distances, summon a horde of feisty rats, and briefly slow or even stop time. Of course, they have to be unlocked and upgraded one at a time as we collect special "runes," using a creepy mechanical heart to locate each one. The process isn't quite as deep or diverse as those in *Deus Ex* or *BioShock*, but we can also choose to arm ourselves with a number of gadgets, like a tranquilizer crossbow, a single-shot pistol, and the steampunk version of a proximity mine. With a blade in our right hand and powers in our left, we feel we're sufficiently equipped to be unstoppable.

Double-Edged Sword

This, however, is where things get tricky for *Dishonored*. Ostensibly, we can choose to take a stealthy approach—avoiding alerting or even killing anyone, including "boss" characters—or we can exercise all of Corvo's powers to deadly effect. The thing is, the game actively encourages us to operate in stealth mode every single chance it gets: it's easier to earn runes and other rewards, fewer pesky rats and half-dead plague victims (essentially zombies) show up to sap our health, and pieces of story and dialogue are revealed that would have otherwise been left secret. Hell, the only way to unlock the "good" ending is by being non-violent.

Now, this isn't all bad. The game equips us with a unique and satisfying toolset for playing stealth—from leaning around corners undetected to hiding unconscious bodies to a power that lets us see enemies through walls. It's a refreshing take on the play style, and the fact that the game always provides a story-based option for sparing assassination targets, leaving them neutralized but alive, is nothing short of genius.

But this also presents a two-fold problem. Fold number one: a lack of variety. Using the teleportation and "dark vision" powers together, we were able to zip through nearly the entire game without a problem. Teleport behind a guy, choke him out, repeat. We had to employ tranq darts and time manipulation a handful of times, and we definitely reloaded recent saves during our trial-and-error journey through each section, but by and large, our strategy never changed, because frankly, it never needed to. The game never presented enough challenge or variety to force us to rethink our approach, even when we took extra time to hunt for runes. The results were still tense and satisfying, but they could

Five clever ways to murder enemies

Silent and Deadly
Use Dark Vision to monitor an enemy's view, then Blink (teleport) behind him and snap his neck. Simple and effective.

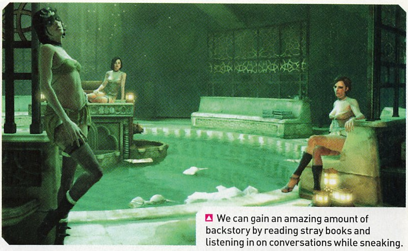
Kamikaze Rodent
Strap a proximity mine to a rat. Then posses the rat's body and head towards a group of enemies. Living time bomb!

Long Way Down
Possess an enemy and walk him towards a ledge someplace high. Leave his body and use Windblast to push him off.

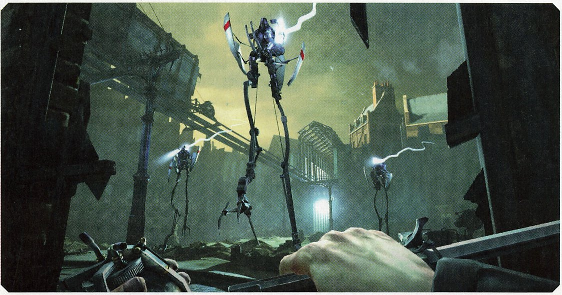
Reversal of Fortune
Reverse the polarity of an electrifying force field using a rewire tool, then Windblast an enemy into his own defenses.

Here, Catch!
After an enemy lobs a grenade, slow time, grab the grenade, and send it sailing straight back to him.

The government, the church, the aristocracy—*Dishonored's* complex political world adds plenty of depth to the entire experience.



We can gain an amazing amount of backstory by reading stray books and listening in on conversations while sneaking.

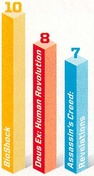


ORDER SHALL PREVAIL

also be characterized as disappointingly repetitive.

Then there's the second fold: playing as a pacifist means forgoing most of those awesome powers we outlined above, rendering one of *Dishonored's* major draws totally moot. What good is commanding a swarm of rats when you don't plan on creating any corpses? And why bother exploring the environment when all we'll find is money we'll never spend or maybe a rune that will unlock an ability we'll never use?

The game may want us to play stealth, but that approach ultimately limits the experience.



ScorePole

Dishonored faces some very recognizable competition, but still manages to hold its own.

Creative Destruction

Thankfully, there's an obvious solution: multiple playthroughs (sort of a given, considering the game doesn't offer multiplayer or a New Game Plus mode). After beating the game the way it's "supposed" to be beaten and reaping all the sweet, sweet Trophies, it's much easier to go back and start to think of the whole thing as more of a playground where we can get creative and find funs ways to combine Corvo's powers. Experimentation almost always pays off, since his abilities are genuinely fun to use, and the game places very few limitations on what we can do with them. Want to possess one of those scary stilt-walker guys? Hell yes! How about freezing time and positioning an enemy in front of the bullet he just fired? Why not?

The violent approach isn't perfect either, though. First-person hand-to-hand combat feels a bit awkward, and the lack of boss battles means this method also feels a bit repetitive—especially if you're not the inventive type. Plus, either way, we must deal with some wonky campaign pacing, since the game starts by delivering gameplay in discrete doses but then devolves into one super-long mission towards the end.

All of these problems are ultimately forgivable, but they still prevent *Dishonored* from becoming a truly must-play experience. Then again, it's pretty hard to pass up an immersive world brimming with superstition and science, a campaign that gives us honest-to-goodness assassination missions (glaring at you, *Assassin's Creed*), and a protagonist who can blast enemies into a wall of electricity...even if he is a little flawed.

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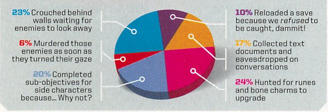
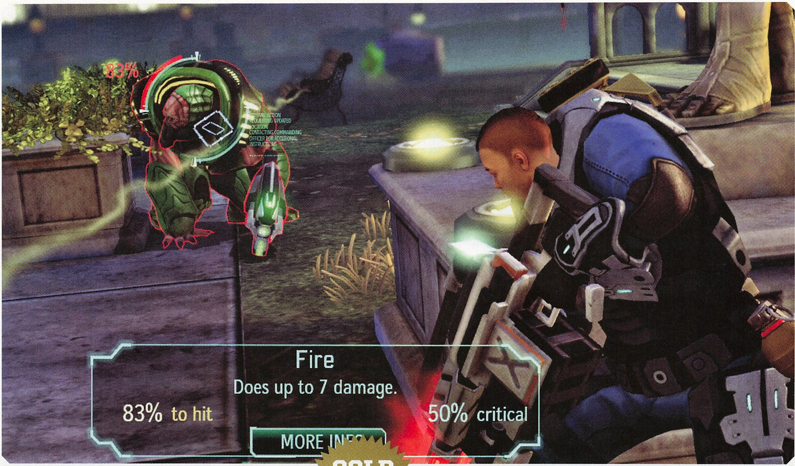
SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

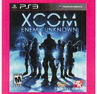
What we did in... Dishonored





GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Info



Format PS3
Pub 2K Games
Dev Firaxis
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like *Valkyria Chronicles* crossed with *Civilization* and *Call of Cthulhu*.

XCOM Enemy Unknown

E.T. go home

Capt. Jose Luis Valdez—"Nuke" to his friends—is a heavy-weapons expert and the only survivor of the battle that began the alien invasion. Lt. Sidney "Omega" White is a sniper who's been with XCOM—the clandestine, multinational agency formed to fight the mounting extraterrestrial threat—for almost as long, and the two have had a friendly rivalry for months, jockeying for leadership as the invasion escalates.

They've both taken their share of wounds, but they've always survived where others died—and now, they're all that remains of a six-man squad we sent in to investigate an alien base. The rest were gunned down by hulking Mutons, shot in the back by their own panicking friends, or zombified by terrifying things called Chryssalids.

Pushing deeper into the base, the heroes spot its alien commander—but as they take cover, it takes control of White's mind. Unwilling to kill his buddy, Valdez looses two volleys of machinegun fire at the alien. It's not enough. Just before the creature shuts down White's brain, the sniper calmly places his rifle's muzzle against Valdez's forehead and fires.

No. This won't do *at all*. Reload save.

Running the Show

Stories like the above—with action that takes place in the game and a narrative that unfolds in our heads—

Five tips For bringing your troops home safe

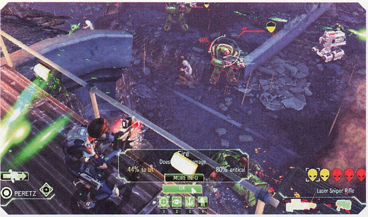
1 **Stay in Cover** Never leave your troops exposed unless you're sure they're safe—anyone standing out in the open makes a tempting target.

2 **Don't Chance It** Do you only have a five percent chance to hit that Sectoid? Go into Overwatch instead to shoot him when he moves.

3 **Wear Armor** A few extra hit points can make a huge difference. Research, build, and wear new armor as soon as possible.

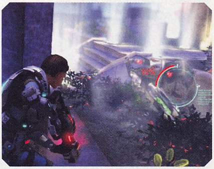
4 **One at a Time** One dead enemy is always better than two wounded ones. Keep your troops together and take down each target as a group.

5 **Kill All Chryssalids** Chryssalids move in fast packs and will impregnate your troops with more Chryssalids, zombifying them in the process. Don't ever let them get close.



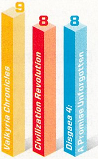
Terror Missions challenge us to rescue civilians from alien death squads.

MAXIM ZINCHENKO
Laser Sniper Rifle



Aliens range from "Grey"-like Sectoids to bullet-reflecting Ethereals, with a variety of hulking brutes and robotic horrors in between.

are a big part of *XCOM: Enemy Unknown's* open-ended appeal, perhaps even bigger than its accessible mix of turn-based strategy, base-building, and resource management. Our troops—and their missions—are generated semi-randomly, but the work we put into cultivating the survivors of each terrifying battle into toughened, highly skilled warriors makes every advancement and sacrifice important, every mission seem crucial, and every personality we project onto our vaguely defined soldiers seem *real.*



ScorePole

XCOM stands tall among PS3's small turn-based strategy crowd.

That said, the stuff that *isn't* in our heads is pretty fantastic. *Enemy Unknown* is a deeply involving tactical RPG that tasks us with managing a top-secret agency—by guiding research into captured alien technology, building and maintaining a base, creating futuristic new equipment, juggling finances, and deciding which missions to pursue—as well as guiding its infantry into battle. There's a chain of key story events we can pursue at our own pace; in the meantime, we're free to undertake semi-random missions that mainly revolve around countering mass abduction attempts and investigating crashed UFOs (shot down by our own awesome jets).

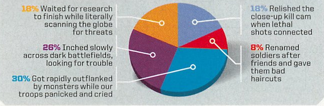
In every mission, our surroundings—and the locations of our enemies—are shrouded in a fog of war, forcing us to cautiously explore, always looking for cover spots (marked by shield icons) where agents can wait out the enemy turn in relative safety.

When we finally do run into aliens, attacking is as simple as picking whichever target we have the best chance of hitting and hoping for the best. As our troops rank up, they'll earn new skills by being assigned to different classes, letting them launch rockets, line up perfect headshots, and even launch psychic attacks that can shatter or control enemy brains.

Though the action tends to stutter when things get crowded, and the A.I. is a little shaky (when set to Overwatch guard mode, for example, soldiers tend to fire at enemies on the other sides of walls), *XCOM's* combat stays taut and engrossing throughout the game's flexible run time—and into its refreshingly balanced multiplayer, which pits mixed squads of humans and aliens against each other. But it's the simulation elements that make it feel like we're actually overseeing a secret war against an unseen alien menace, and combining the two makes *Enemy Unknown* a relentlessly addictive, almost endlessly replayable experience.

MIKEL REPARAZ

What we did in... XCOM: Enemy Unknown



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Characters can now sweat and get filthy. Ain't technology grand?

Dead or Alive 5

Relevance is fleeting

Tecmo's *Dead or Alive* rose to notoriety over a decade ago thanks to a teen-pleasing combo of amazing 3D graphics and unabashedly objectified female fighters. These days, the technical competition is fierce and the audience has matured, yet *Dead or Alive 5* seems content to trade on the same tricks it always has. It's a nice vehicle for a little fast-paced buttonmashing, but it hasn't really kept up with the times.

To be fair, beneath its notoriously salacious veneer lies the seed of a decent fighting game. Strikes, throws, and holds (which let you catch and reverse enemy strikes) have an easily understood rock-paper-scissors relationship, and most special moves and attack strings require just a few simple button taps. Literally anyone can pick up the controller and start mashing out some impressive kung fu, which is *DOA5's* greatest strength.

From the high-impact blows to the explosive stages to the increasingly impractical costumes, everything feels geared toward maximum spectacle. Team Ninja's pushing that angle further with a new "cinematic" camera, but it doesn't feel too different from the normal one. The new Cliffhanger edge-dangling confrontations are also cute, but don't affect gameplay much. Same goes for the new Power Blows.

Players who look past the trifling new features will find more of the same over-the-top martial arts that *DOA's* delivered for over a decade. It's undeniably satisfying to punch someone so hard that they burst through the arena's walls, then free-fall to the stage's next lower tier. The arena selection is generous and demolition opportunities are rife, even if the overall visuals aren't as impressive (relative to the competition) as they were in the past.

Relationship Material?

In a low-calorie, low-investment way, this can all be fun. The wheels start to come off a bit, though, when players begin to seek greater depth. The game does try. For example, *DOA5* has an impressive variety of stuns, each with different properties. But it's unlikely

Info

Format PS3
Pub Tecmo Koei
Dev Team Ninja
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like a time warp back to 2000, only with less clothing.

Five fighters DOA5's complex narrative threads

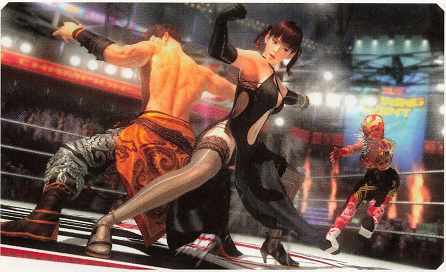
Zack
(Entrepreneur)
Zack runs a helicopter taxi service that no one ever wants to use. No one likes him.

Lisa Hamilton
(Secret Scientist)
A mysterious wrestling Mardi Gras refugee or an elite DOATEC scientist? Spoiler: both!

Akira Yuki
(Violent Refugee)
Akira got lost on the way to *Virtua Fighter 6*. He smells bad and only ever wants to spar.

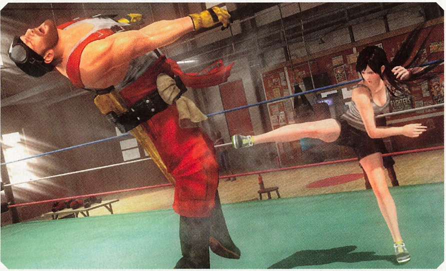
Christie
(Poor Dresser)
Christie is questing to find a shirt that will button all the way to the top. No luck so far.

Jann Lee
(Psychopath)
Jann Lee wants to punch everyone, everywhere, all the time, no exceptions. Avoid eye contact.



The Power Blow can only be used at 50 percent health. Can it turn the tide?

The graphics are decent, but nothing you won't see in other games these days.



that most people will persist long enough to learn their intricacies, as the basic action just isn't rewarding enough. Despite their unique fighting styles, *DOA5's* fighters feel surprisingly similar tactically. It might look similar, but *DOA5* can't match the gameplay depth of *Tekken* or *Virtua Fighter.*

As always with fighting games, finding other people to play against is crucial. A solid collection of online modes goes a long way toward meeting that need. Good thing, because single-player is predictably barren. Aside from staples like training, arcade, and survival, only the disjointed, ridiculous plot of Story mode stands between the player and boredom. Without anyone to play against, boredom will win out pretty quickly.

More than *Tekken* and *Virtua Fighter*, *DOA* is light, flashy entertainment. It serves that purpose well enough, but it's no surprise that *Dead or Alive* is rarely cited as anyone's favorite fighting series. It's fast and breezy, but not particularly relevant unless you're seeking spectacle or skin. ALEXANDRA HALL

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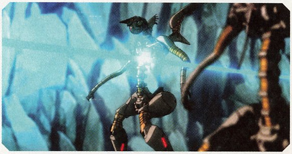
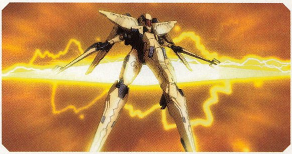


Updated anime cutscenes in *The 2nd Runner* leave our mouths watering unrepentantly.



All these Orbital Frames sure are...well-endowed. Even the ones that are identified as female.

Zone of the Enders HD Collection

Back in Jehuty's cockpit

Info

PS3
ZONE OF THE ENDERS
HD COLLECTION
KONAMI

Format PS3
Pub Konami
Dev Kojima Productions/High Voltage Software
Price $39.99
ESRB Teen
It's like meeting up with an old sweetheart who's gotten a tasteful nose job.

Stunning as it is, *Zone of the Enders HD Collection* relies heavily on nostalgia. We loved *Zone of the Enders* and *The 2nd Runner* when they came out initially; however, they may not hold the same appeal to newcomers. They're repetitive, there's a lot of backtracking in the first game, and neither title is particularly lengthy. The whole collection lasts about eight to 10 hours.

Seeing these two games in HD brought wistful tears to our eyes. The cutscenes in *Zone of the Enders* look a little fuzzy, while cutscenes in *The 2nd Runner* are crystal clear—but the gameplay in both looks wonderfully sharp.

Beyond the added Trophy support, the *HD Collection* doesn't bring much new to the series. The controls are as smooth as they've always been, and the upgraded graphics just give us a new reason to replay two games we already love. The bargain price (along with the *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* demo) might make it more attractive to gamers new to *Zone of the Enders,* and it's definitely worth it for old fans. ANNE LEWIS

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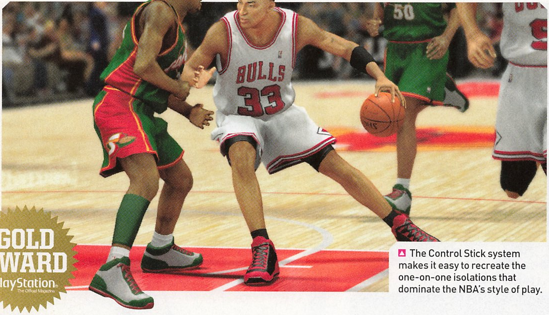
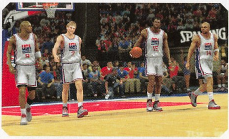


GOLD AWARD PlayStation The Official Magazine

▲ The Control Stick system makes it easy to recreate the one-on-one isolations that dominate the NBA's style of play.



NBA 2K13

Another slam dunk for 2K Sports

Chairman of the Boards

Rap and entertainment mogul JAY Z is prominently listed as *NBA 2K13*'s executive producer. He's brought a new style to the game's presentation with a handpicked soundtrack that includes hits from a variety of artists including Kanye West, Too Short, Coldplay, U2, and himself. We hope this doesn't mean a suspicious bump for the Brooklyn Nets' team ranking though!

When the previous year's offering garners a perfect score and is arguably the best sports videogame in recent years, it's hard to imagine that *NBA 2K13* could elevate the franchise's already superb graphics and gameplay. But like a monster slam dunk, it delivers.

The all-new Control Stick system highlights this year's gameplay improvements, allowing more precise ball handling through the Right-analog stick. The system requires practice to master, but intuitively allows ankle-breaking crossovers, stutter steps, spins, and a variety of other moves that are dependent on the player's skill rating. We put in our time at training camp in the new MyCareer mode to get a feel for the new system and the variety of moves that can result from combining dual stick movements and button taps—both intentional and, at least initially, accidental. The complement to the innovative ball-handling controls is the Dynamic Shot Generator, which lets us simply press L2 to initiate a shot, while the players adjust and react to body position and physical contact during its release.

This year, the ratings and Signature Skills of individual players have a more profound effect on the type and effectiveness of the shot. Signature Skills are specific offensive or defensive attributes that can change the outcome of a game. They allow superstars like Kobe Bryant to hit clutch shots in big games just as he would in real life, but also allow other players to have different sets of skills that define their niche and value to the team. Signature Skills can also be purchased for custom-built players using earned Virtual Currency (VC). For our small, long-range bombing shooting guard, we saved enough VC to give him the Spot Up Shooter and Deadeye skills.

PS3
NBA 2K13

Info

Format PS3
Pub 2K Sports **Dev** Visual Concepts
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Everyone
It's like a dynasty now, not just another franchise.

Another notable new addition is the MyTeam mode. This is a highly addictive on- and offline play mode that combines the strategy of building a team (by using VC) and the thrill of online competition as each team vies to earn a spot in the playoffs. We built our team with a starter pack that included 12 random players and other essentials to play—a head coach, uniforms, an arena, and a playbook. Although three of our bench players were centers, we jumped right into exhibition play against a classic Lakers team that included Magic Johnson, James Worthy, and Kurt Rambis, and held our own until the very end.

As if sublime gameplay and the wealth of modes and features weren't enough, *NBA 2K13* allows us to recreate the ultimate basketball fantasy showdown between the 1992 Dream Team and this year's Olympic Team USA squad. It's just the type of fan service that elevates *2K13* beyond mere annual greatness and into hall-of-fame consideration.

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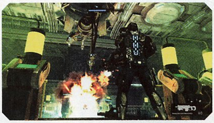
NORBERT TYDINGCO

Deep Black

Format **PSN** Pub **505 Games** Dev **Biart** Price **$14.99** ESRB **Mature**

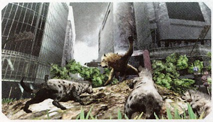


As far as gimmicks go, taking sci-fi–tinged warfare below the waves isn't a bad idea, but *Deep Black's* uninspired, wonky gunfights ignite our ire far more than our enthusiasm. A poorly executed cover system, plodding campaign, and repetitive encounters against foes that telegraph their actions sap what precious little amusement we derive from shooting foes between frequent deaths. Though this third-person shooter may be a looker, its dull, repetitive nature and distinct lack of personality do little justice to the sharp presentation. *Deep Black* stands out in all the wrong ways, and despite its unique aquatic focus, it still manages to be completely forgettable. **NATHAN MEUNIER**

PlayStation 3

Tokyo Jungle

Format **PSN** Pub **SCEA** Dev **SCE Japan Studio/Crispy's** Price **$14.99** ESRB **Teen**

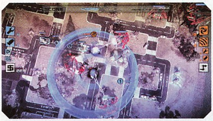


This bizarre take on a post-apocalyptic Tokyo puts us behind the paws of a variety of animals, from man's best friend to the king of the jungle. With humans extinct, the beasts must do whatever it takes to survive. For us, this means viciously snacking on smaller animals as carnivores and stealthily avoiding such bloody conflicts as herbivores. While its visuals are dated, *Jungle's* survival-driven gameplay is surprisingly addictive. On top of the dog-eat-dog melees, a number of RPG-flavored elements—such as ranking up to earn the affections of potential mates—elevate the experience. Anyone craving a fresh take on the stealth-action genre should sniff this one out. **MATT CABRAL**

PlayStation 7

Anomaly Warzone Earth

Format **PSN** Pub **11bit** Dev **11bit** Price **$9.99**
ESRB **Everyone 10+**



The mobile scene is flooded with tower-defense games, so when *Anomaly* hit the iPad, it was a welcome and creative twist on the genre. This is essentially a tower *offense* game, where we take control of an insertion force to destroy alien towers. The gorgeous graphics, action-heavy sci-fi bent, and otherwise great production values help overcome the relatively simple gameplay. Thankfully, continually changing routes for units that constantly move forward while strategically laying down power ups is a fun and engaging concept. The gameplay doesn't change much, but the story is more fleshed out on PS3, the levels are longer, and the controls work well. **JASON D'APRILE**

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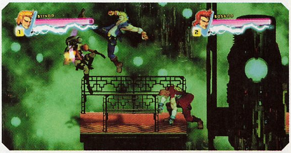
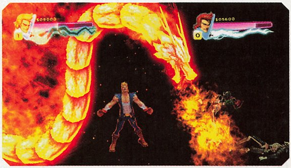


From seedy streets to space stations, *Neon's* varied environments take players on an out-of-this-world journey.



The inspired "mixtape" upgrade system complements the classic *Double Dragon* formula with gameplay depth and cheesy retro references.

Double Dragon Neon

A bro-tastic reboot

Info

Format PSN
Pub Majesco Entertainment
Dev WayForward
Price $9.99
ESRB Teen
It's like a big high-five for fans of '80s brawlers.

Beating the stuffing out of bad guys with baseball bats was a blast in 1987's coin-op co-op brawler *Double Dragon*. The HD re-imagining, *Double Dragon: Neon,* retains the guilty-pleasure gameplay, but tweaks the side-scrolling smackdowns with deeper mechanics and goofy nods to '80s pop culture and game tropes.

As mulleted brothers Billy and Jimmy Lee, we unleash fists and feet into ugly street thugs and boss baddies. This time, though, our ass-kicking arsenal's layered with a variety of special moves—both offensive and defensive—as well as an upgrade system that complements the more buttonmashy combat with passive and active perks.

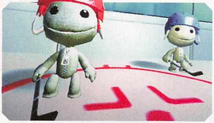
While the brawling is better than it was back in the day, hit detection issues, frustrating difficulty spikes, and the lack of online co-op keeps *Neon* from reaching its full potential. Still, while the action sometimes stumbles, the beyond-bizarre presentation is brimming with nostalgia-fueled fun. Newcomers might not understand the appeal (or get the jokes), but gamers who grew up in the '80s will think it's totally rad. **MATT CABRAL**

PlayStation 8

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

LittleBigPlanet

Sackboy is better on Vita



LBP Vita is more than quasi-2D platforming.

Info
Format PS Vita
Pub SCEA **Dev** Tarsier Studios/ Double Eleven/Media Molecule
Price $39.99 **ESRB** Everyone
It's like the best *LBP*, bar none.

Until now, Sony's big games (*Uncharted, Resistance*) have made concessions to "fit" on PS Vita. They've felt like fun, but stripped-down versions of bigger games. *LittleBigPlanet* is different. Instead of fitting, it uses the power and functions of Vita to realize its true potential.

As in the PS3 games, single-player gives us a six- to eight-hour story filled with challenging platforming and charming characters. All the funny, informative tutorials are still narrated by Stephen Fry, and the game looks just charming and wonderful as the PS3 *LBPs,* too. So what makes this version so special? The devs at Tarsier really sat down and thought about how to use Vita's various control inputs to enhance the way we play *LittleBigPlanet*. Nothing here feels shoehorned in; every new input brings something useful and genuinely exciting.

Example? We can use the front touchscreen to drag certain blocks around a level. So if there's a massive jump that we can't cross, dragging a special blue block into place allows us to create a stepping stone to the other side. Blue blocks can also be pushed into the background to unblock routes (remember, all *LBP* levels work on three layers: back, middle, and front), and cleverly, we can also push green blocks out of the background using the rear touchpanel. Tilt control? That's in too. Camera? Yup.

Having all these functions is one thing, but what really makes them shine is the way they've been perfectly integrated into every level. Nothing here feels like a "one-off" or a novelty feature. It's all here for a reason, and that makes the single-player the best *LBP* campaign on any format.

All the new solo mode tricks transfer to the creation tools as well, adding more options to the already vast toolset. How is creation on Vita? The smaller screen makes precision work tricky, but touch controls make it quicker. Not interested in DIY? We can still go online and play all 7 million user-crafted levels created on PS3. If this were just a solo Vita platformer, it'd be worth playing. With the community features and creation options though, it's a genuine reason to buy a Vita. ANDY HARTUP

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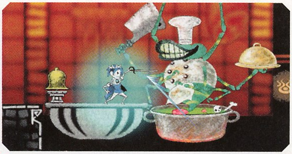
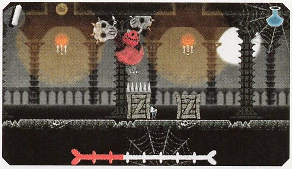


In spite of being chalk-drawn, some of the monsters' herky-jerky movements make them just a little bit terrifying.



Like the rooms leading up to them, each boss fight is a puzzle unto itself.

Dokuro

Heart of bone

Info
Format PS Vita
Pub GungHo Online Ent. America
Dev Game Arts
Price $19.99 (download only)
ESRB Everyone 10+
It's like a chalk-drawn *Ico* by way of *Lemmings.*

A damsel-in-distress story with a twist, *Dokuro* centers on a hapless little skeleton named Dokuro, who falls in love with the cute-but-oblivious princess his demonic boss kidnaps and intends to marry. Taking pity on her, he leads her through the Dark Lord's castle, clearing a path through 2D puzzle rooms full of monsters, traps, and other obstacles so that she can make it to safety.

It all starts out simply enough, with Dokuro pushing crates and smacking down weak monsters, but things quickly and consistently gets more complicated from there. In addition to being able to thwack things with a bone, Dokuro gradually earns the power to draw chalk lines using the touchscreen, which—depending on their color—can do things like create lit fuses or flood pits with water. He can also briefly turn into a dashing hero, trading his double-jump for a sword that's vital for killing his increasingly disturbing enemies—especially the huge bosses, which move like creepy stop-motion monsters. The challenges can get dauntingly tough, but *Dokuro's* clever design, wry humor, and effusive charm make it irresistible. MIKEL REPARAZ

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F1 2012

Now with 100 percent more America

Info

Format PS3
Pub/Dev Codemasters
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Everyone
It's like a driver's ed class on the challenges of F1 racing.

After a five-year hiatus, Formula 1 racing returns to the U.S. in November 2012, and to our delight, *F1 2012* actually includes the freshly paved Circuit of the Americas track, as well as a few new gameplay modes. In Champions Mode, we battle F1 World Champions in a range of scenarios, such as fending off Lewis Hamilton in the rain. The Young Driver Test familiarizes novices with the series' jargon and gameplay (think licenses in *Gran Turismo*).

Although driving an overly engineered machine like an F1 car may sound easy, it takes a lot of skill—something the game demonstrates frustratingly well. Even with the track map and optimal race line displayed, it's better to memorize the track configuration in order to anticipate and set up for turns. The DualShock's twitchy analog stick, which requires the gentlest of nudges, doesn't help either, so we recommend using a steering wheel.

F1 2012 includes a variety of smaller updates as well, such as localized weather that creates patches of dry and wet track for varying dynamics. While these additions sound nominal, they should be much appreciated by F1 fans and newcomers alike. All said and done, this is an extremely solid racing experience. **CARTER JUNG**

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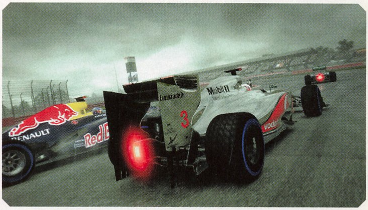
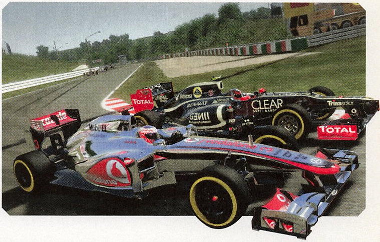
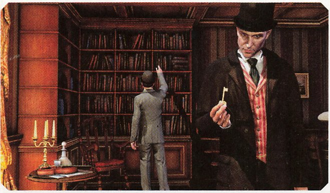
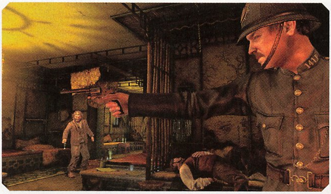


Race against champs like Vettel, Hamilton, and Schumacher.







Fans of old school point-and-click adventures will feel right at home with... Holmes.

The Testament of Sherlock Holmes

Britain's super sleuth finally gets adventurous

Info

Format PS3
Pub Atlus
Dev Frogwares
Price $39.99
ESRB Mature
It's like *L.A. Noire* and *Resident Evil* play a game of *Myst*.

In recent years, a lot of adventure games have actually been action games with a bit of conversation and customization tacked on. But *Testament* is an adventure in the truest sense of the word. Not based on any particular Sherlock Holmes story, this is a throwback to the point-and-click adventures of old, but with the clue-finding mechanics of *L.A. Noire* and puzzles that feel like old-school *Resident Evil* games.

Set in 1898 London, the game has the famous shamus using his keen eye, skills of deduction, and the help of his BFF Dr. Watson to solve an intriguing and often macabre mystery. It's just too bad this isn't as engaging as one of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's original stories. It also suffers from clunky and sometimes frustratingly inaccurate controls, an occasionally wonky camera, low-grade visuals, and subpar voice acting. But for (patient and forgiving) fans of *L.A. Noire*, Holmes, and old-school adventures, the challenging puzzles, thoughtful deductions, and reduced price point make it truly adventurous. **PAUL SEMEL**

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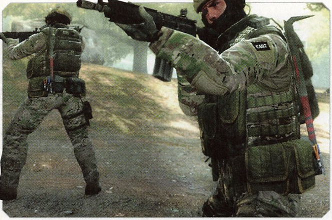
Counter-Strike Global Offensive

What's old is new again



Forget about spray and pray—victory in *Counter-Strike* is all about careful coordination and superior skill.

Info
Format PSN
Pub Valve **Dev** Valve
Price $14.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like old-school *Counter-Strike* with a fresh coat of paint.

Anyone accustomed to the fancy bells and whistles of more recent first-person shooters will find *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive's* no-frills approach to running and gunning a shock. Nearly the exact same core framework from the original *Counter-Strike* remains intact here, and despite a great visual update, this feels like it's stuck in the past.

Classic Bomb Defusal and Hostage Rescue return alongside a few fresh modes, offering different objectives for the terrorist and counter-terrorist sides. The old familiar maps are beautifully reworked, yet it's a shame new maps are relegated to only the Arms Race and Domination modes.

Matches hinge on cultivating raw skill instead of relying on brute force, and learning from each mistake is key to enjoying the experience. Quick kills and permanent death—a staple component of *Counter-Strike's* more deliberate, tactical approach to the genre—will sideline unwary newcomers and force them to become spectators until the next round. Matches flow quickly, but *Global Offensive's* unforgiving old-school nature makes it difficult to ease into. Fortunately, the design is still fun, even if doesn't quite hold up against modern FPS fare. **NATHAN MEUNIER**

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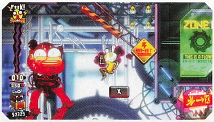

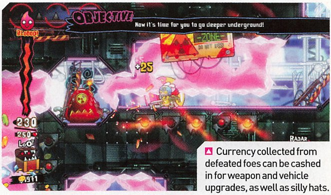

Currency collected from defeated foes can be cashed in for weapon and vehicle upgrades, as well as silly hats.

Hell Yeah! Wrath of the Dead Rabbit

Revenge is a dish best served by a bunny

Sporting a sick sense of humor, over-the-top cartoon violence, and an undead, sexually deviant bunny rabbit, *Hell Yeah's* one brain-frying ride. Beyond its bizarre bullet points, though, it's also a surprisingly satisfying action-platformer with plenty of depth.

As Ash—the titular hell-ruling hare, who's been caught on film in a compromising position with his rubber ducky—we're out to track down every last demon who's viewed the questionable photos on the Hellternet, and murder them until we find the originals. We navigate the netherworld in a sawblade-spinning jetpack, slaughtering any minions that dare cross our path as we go. Aside from viscerally carving through ugly creatures in a vibrant display of rainbow-colored gore, the game's "Metroidvania" structure lets us revisit areas to open previously inaccessible paths with specific items, unlocking new areas and collectibles.

Buttonmashing finishing moves, screen-filling boss battles, and more creative ways to waste monsters than we can shake a lopped demon limb at round out the frenetic fun. Its controls aren't quite as precise as we'd like for a platformer, and the old-school difficulty can be occasionally punishing, but those gripes aside, *Hell Yeah's* a twisted trip worth taking. **MATT CABRAL**

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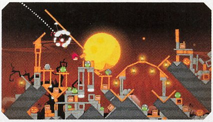
Info
Format PSN
Pub Sega
Dev Arkedo Studio
Price $14.99
ESRB Teen
It's like a trippy trip to hell without the aid of pharmaceuticals.

Angry Birds Trilogy

Format **PS3** Pub **Activision** Dev **Rovio** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Everyone**



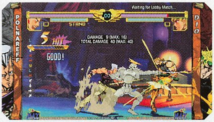
Packed with fowl-flinging, pig-pummeling fun, *Angry Birds Trilogy* brings the smartphone phenomenon to PS3 owners...at a steep price. In addition to the addictive, pickup-and-play appeal the series is known for, *Trilogy* adds HD visuals (including new in-game effects and cutscenes), Trophy support, Move-enabled mechanics, and even some fresh levels. That said, the series' most recent sequel, *Angry Birds Space*, is notably absent. The biggest drawback, however, is the hefty price tag. As a PSN budget title, *Trilogy* would soar. At $40, though, it's a bit of a turkey.

PlayStation 5

MATT CABRAL

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure HD

Format **PSN** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Capcom** Price **$19.99** ESRB **Teen**



The latest in Capcom's retro revamping frenzy, *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* is certainly a fun and distinctive fighter, with the strangest roster of characters this side of *BlazBlue*. The HD graphics shine and the gameplay is surprisingly technical, but there's a disappointing lack of extras here. In comparison to Capcom's superb update of *Street Fighter III*, *JoJo's* is a disappointingly bare-bones release, especially given the relatively hefty price tag. Thankfully, the online play is very stable (provided players can actually find others to fight with). *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* is a strange footnote in the history of classic fighters, making this HD release a niche game directed at fans of the anime series and nostalgic lovers of offbeat 2D fighting games.

PlayStation 7

JASON D'APRILE

La Pucelle Tactics

Format **PSN** Pub **Mastiff Games** Dev **Nippon Ichi Software** Price **$9.99** ESRB **Teen**

La Pucelle isn't half-bad compared to some JRPG-ish offerings that have come out lately. Maybe that's not a good sign, since the game's more than 10 years old, but contemporary comparisons aside, *La Pucelle* is easily 10 bucks' worth of strategy-RPG. The mechanics look forward to *Disgaea* at a basic level—winning calls for clever teamwork and finding novel ways to manipulate battlefield conditions—but the details of the combat system make it unique. Personality-wise, the story and characters are cute, but they lack *Disgaea's* tactical-nuclear-snark attitude. Still, it's hard to complain too much. For this price, *La Pucelle* deserves a place on any fan's hard drive.

PlayStation 8

DAVID F. SMITH

DLC Roundup

Transformers: Fall of Cybertron Multiplayer Havoc Pack

Price **$9.99** ESRB **Teen**

Throwing Wheeljack, Blast Off, Ultra Magnus, Zeta Prime, and Perceptor into *Fall of Cybertron's* multiplayer mix is sweet on its own, but this pack also makes all of their parts available for robo customization. Time to transform and roll out.

DC Universe Online Hand of Fate

Price **$9.99** ESRB **Teen**

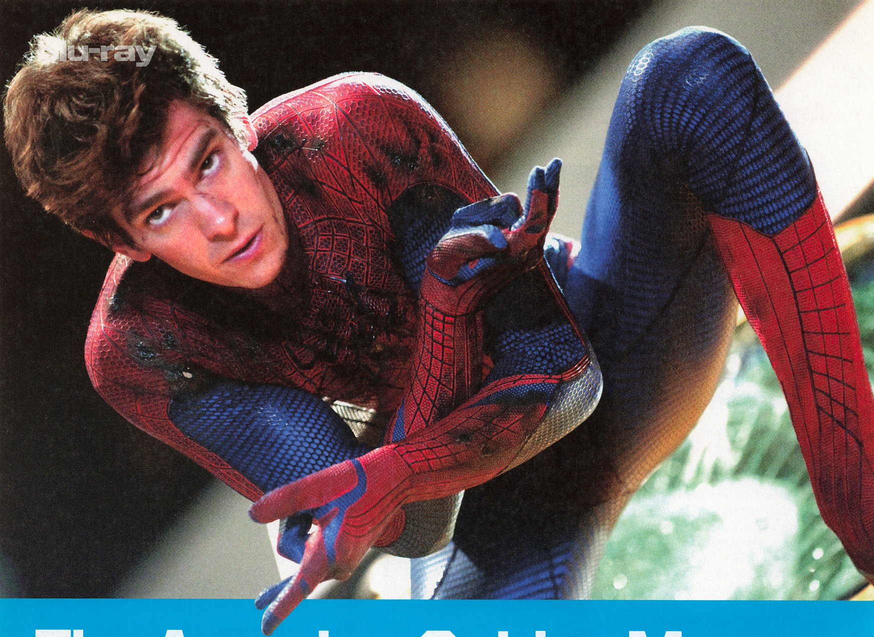
Good or evil, there's something for all superpowered tastes in *Hand of Fate's* six new episodes that play out across Gotham City and Metropolis. A new utility belt attachment makes room for extra goodies and sweet bonus Legends PvP characters round out this DLC.

Download of the Month

Mass Effect 3 Leviathan

Price **$9.99** ESRB **Mature**

Brimming with secrets and revelations woven throughout the epic sci-fi RPG series, *Leviathan's* trio of story-driven missions mine exciting plot territory in and around a new region of the Citadel. While a slightly tweaked ending garners all the headlines, there are plenty of crazy plot twists to be had, and some fresh gear and mods along the way. This is a must-buy DLC for withdrawal-suffering fans.



The Amazing Spider-Man

Re-weaving the familiar web yet once again

Info

Price $55.99
Creators Marc Webb, James Vanderbilt, Alvin Sargent, Stan Lee
Starring Andrew Garfield, Emma Stone, Rhys Ifans, Denis Leary, Martin Sheen, Sally Field
Rated PG-13
Extras Documentaries, deleted scenes, interviews, commentary, second screen support, and more.

Even with the sheer amount of scorn aimed at Sam Raimi's third *Spider-Man* movie, it still seems odd that Sony Pictures chose to entirely reboot the franchise. The result is *The Amazing Spider-Man*, which is clearly trying hard to hit the teen demographic. This Peter Parker, played by Andrew Garfield, is a punky skater boy; an outcast not because he's such a nerd, but purely because he's not a jock.

Thankfully, his wit is still intact, but like most Spider-Man stories, there's only a passing nod to the character's incredible intellect. The story twists the origin story into a conspiracy about the death of Parker's parents, and to firmly separate this new series from the old, there's no Mary Jane Watson at all. The love interest is Gwen Stacy, so fans will immediately know what direction the presumed trilogy will be going in.

Fans, however, will have the biggest problem with this rendition of the web-slinger. There are so many liberties taken with Spidey's origin and holes in the plot that the script just feels lazy. Whole plot threads are just forgotten about and the creation of the web-shooters segment is boggling.

The Lizard is a great choice for the villain, even if he's turned from a primeval force of destruction into a sentient scientist creature. Comic readers might recognize the story arc, but it feels shrunken down to set up a boss fight, rather than tell much of a story. There's also no Daily Bugle, although the retelling of Uncle Ben's death is done surprisingly well.

In fact, Martin Sheen and Sally Field are terrific as Peter's uncle and aunt. Denis Leary is excellent as Capt. Stacy, and the overall cast is fine. Get past the script issues, and the action is superbly done as well. This rendition of Spider-Man moves more like the comic book version, and the new suit is sharp.

The Amazing Spider-Man is admittedly entertaining to watch. The 3D effects are great—especially during the first-person sequences—and there's a commendable amount of extras on the disc. That said, Raimi's first two takes on the character are still noticeably superior, and while more Spider-Man is a good thing, we hope the sequels have more focus and better scripts.

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JASON D'APRILE

Indiana Jones Collection

Treasured Action/Adventure artifacts

Originally released in 1981, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* remains one of the greatest action-adventure movies ever made. Aside from firmly assuring Harrison Ford's career success, the movie created one of modern cinema's most likeable heroes. More than 30 years later, *Raiders* remains a hugely entertaining piece of filmmaking.

The sequels ended up creating plenty of controversy over the years. The underrated *Temple of Doom* nearly single-handedly forced the MPAA to create the PG-13 rating, thanks to its infamous heart-ripping scene. Critics and audiences panned it for the violence and addition of a kid sidekick, but it's still a fun adventure with great action sequences and characters.

Spielberg's apology for *Temple of Doom* was *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, which added Sean Connery as Indy's father. It was a fine return to form and filled with great action and one-liners, but marked what most thought was the end of the series. For many, it should have been.

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull was met with an amazing amount of derision and scorn. Filmgoers rather understandably hated Shia LaBeouf as Indy's son, and the overuse of CG effects took something away from the classic cliffhanger nature of the series. Yet for longtime fans, it was just great to see Indy in action again—even if he was almost ready for retirement.

Having all the films together in HD is a terrific way to revisit the series that George Lucas and Steven Spielberg created as homage to the classic adventures of their youth. While the series is hit-or-miss overall, there's no denying the profound effect the movies and the characters had on American cinema. None of the sequels hit the mark as perfectly as the first, but collectively, the series is superb.

The set is rounded out by a horde of documentaries, interviews, and other bonus features—some of which are brand new, while others have been taken from the previous DVD release. JD

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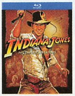


Info

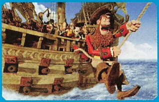
Price $99.98
Creators Steven Spielberg, George Lucas
Starring Harrison Ford, Karen Allen, John Rhys-Davies
Rated PG/PG-13 **Extras** Documentaries, other featurettes.

Blu-ray Roundup

Men in Black 3

Price: $55.99 **Rated:** PG-13

Surprisingly fun with some impressively over-the-top 3D effects, *MiB3* succeeds because it maintains a brisk pace while keeping things light. The jokes work, the action is solid, and Josh Brolin proves himself a dead ringer for a young Tommy Lee Jones. 7



Pirates! Band of Misfits

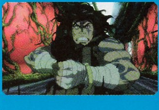
Price $45.99 **Rated** PG

Aardman, the masterminds behind *Wallace and Gromit*, deliver a hilariously clever and somewhat raunchy take on pirates. There's plenty of adult humor mixed in with the familiar pirate stereotypes, and the voice acting and animation are terrific. 8

The Victim

Price $24.99 **Rated** R

'80s icon Michael Biehn sets his directorial debut in grindhouse country and the result is a watchable, if flawed, late-night action flick. The dialogue and acting are frequently stilted, but there's enough sex and violence to keep fans of the genre amused. 6



King of Thorn

Price $24.98 **Rated** Not Rated

A bizarre cross between the traditional Sleeping Beauty tale and survival horror, this anime twists and turns its way through a nightmare-filled castle. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense, but it still somehow manages to be entertaining. 7

Want that

Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

Blue Microphones Mikey Digital

Simply plug Mikey into an iOS device for superior mobile recording. Rotatable stereo mics make it easy to key in on the sound source and there's even an input jack for a guitar.

$100

bluemic.com

i'm Color watch

The Italian-designed i'm Watch connects to our smartphone via Bluetooth and delivers calls, messages, notifications, music, weather forecasts, pictures—and more, directly to our wrist. Except for donuts. Available in a host of colors.

$450

imwatch.it

10:25
Thursday, January 5th
12°C
Vicenza
Calls
Email
Contacts
i'm

Hidden Radio

Hidden indeed: Unscrew the cap and a 360-degree speaker is revealed, which can be cranked to 90dB and paired with any Bluetooth device. Best of all? A dial in the base lets us tune into any station on our AM or FM dial.

$180

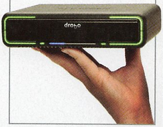
hiddenradiodesign.com

Drobo Mini

Too much data weighing you down? With Thunderbolt and USB 3.0 connectivity, this protected and portable storage array is also blazing fast. Four slots for HDDs or SSDs ensure that we won't run out of space anytime soon.

$650

drobo.com

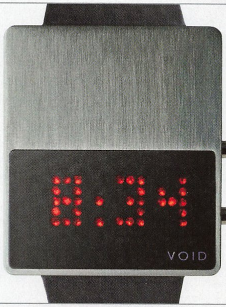


Void V01LED watch

If simplicity is more your wrist style, Void's geometric shapes and half-glass/half-stainless-steel face should be right on time. Created by Swedish designer David Ericsson, it's available in a host of colors.

$150

voidwatches.com



Edifier Spinnaker

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mail@ptom

We fill it to the brim with Skyrim, worry about what we'll play in 25 years, and meet Anne's latest boy toy

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PS3
PSP
PSVITA
PlayStation
Official Magazine
Issue 063 October 2012
Hand-to-hand combat
CALL OF DUTY
hits Vita too!
REVIEWED
Sleeping Dogs
Darksiders II
Papo & Yo
Persona 4 Arena
PREPARE FOR ONLINE WAR
BLACK OPS II
Call of Duty devs reveal multiplayer intel
HANDS-ON!
RESIDENT EVIL 6
The first ten hours
DEAD OR ALIVE 5
DEFIANCE
DEADPOOL
FAMILY GUY

We tried giving peace a chance, but then we found out it didn't come with any cool gear. We need cool gear.

A Game in the Hand

In response to Roger Burchill's PS3 "download and streaming" comments in issue 61: What happens when we attempt to enjoy our PS4 digital downloads years later? Will software companies continue to host our purchased digital content for decades? These are the questions we need to concern ourselves with when the discussion of a digital-only console arises. If I purchased an Atari 2600 tomorrow, I could still find perfectly playable 30-year-old software. If I were to buy a second PS4 system 25 years after its release, would I be able to download my 25-year-old purchases? It seems that not enough gamers are discussing these concerns. Instead, they are simply debating the usefulness of owning physical media. Games and experiences often outlast the consoles themselves; let us not forget this as we venture into the possibility of a mainstream download-only console.
ANOTHER WORLD **THE INTERNET**

Don't worry, we're confident publishers will be more than happy to release (for a fee) "complete" or "remastered" or "director's cut" collections of games you'll no longer be able to play otherwise. It's the wave of the future!

Arrow to the DLC

I am personally pissed at Bethesda Softworks. Not only did they decide to give us the raw end of the bargain on the "highly acclaimed" *Dawnguard* DLC for *Skyrim* by giving it to Xbox players first, they then proclaimed that they might not even release it for the PS3 at all because of "technical issues." I'm not trying to be a douche, but if every other publisher has no problem releasing DLC on PS3, I don't see why Bethesda should have "technical issues." Now they've announced the *Hearthfire* add-on with NO mention of PS3! I want to think that this is corporate greed, trying to reap extra benefits from Microsoft, but they have gone too far. I love *Elder Scrolls*, but if Bethesda keeps pulling this cold-shoulder BS, they will get some serious hate from PS3 players. **MRFUSION13** SUMMERVILLE, GA

There's no denying Skyrim *has had its tech hiccups on PS3. While patches have stabilized the situation on the core game, it appears adding DLC would see the return of the lag problem. Bethesda has indicated it's actively working with Sony to resolve the issues and bring both DLC offerings to PS3, but there's been no word yet on their progress and they might not succeed. Keep your fingers crossed.*

Splinter Cell: Conviction never made it to PS3, but that doesn't mean we can't enjoy *Blacklist*.

Splintered Franchise

Why has Ubisoft just randomly decided to throw *Splinter Cell: Blacklist* our way after depriving us of *Conviction*?? I don't get it. How are we gonna know what's going on?! I know I'd like to see a port or at least a downloadable version of *Conviction*. Also, I understand that replacing Michael Ironside for the reason of motion-capture tech and all that, but seriously, that's like switching Harrison Ford for a different Indiana Jones. It's just not Sam Fisher!!
WESLEY **THE INTERNET**

True, we might be a little lost, but we're not gonna complain. Have you SEEN Blacklist? *We're just overjoyed it's coming to PS3. Also, Eric Johnson—the new Sam Fisher—is a very capable actor (Or as Anne puts it: OMG HE'S SO HANDSOME).*

The Bottom Line

I'm writing in response to your issue 63 editorial. I have one original PSone, an original PS2, and a backwards-compatible PS3 offline. The last two games I purchased were *Soulcalibur IV* from

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2008 and *Mortal Kombat* from 2011. I purchase both new and sealed for only $25 each. I have rarely, if ever, paid full price for any game. I have always preferred to wait for a price drop. I have plenty of games to entertain me. If the PS4 sports $70 games, I'll wait for a price drop. If the PS4 has online gaming only, I won't buy the system. I realize I may not represent the norm, but like cockroaches, if you see one, there must be hundreds more like me out there.

JOE CONNOR PENNSVILLE, NJ

Yes, patience is a virtue...that's rewarded by more affordable games. But don't stress about whether the next PlayStation console will be online-only—there's been no official statement to that effect, and we highly doubt Sony would abandon the Blu-ray format.

Tech Head

I recently discovered that Sony was releasing a wearable HDTV. Having the equivalent of an 80-inch TV you can wear on your head is awesome. It only took me about a nanosecond to make an intuitive leap that I hope Sony makes. With the available tech of the Move controller and a wearable HDTV, how long do we need to wait for a virtual display that uses Move to allow us to "look" around virtual worlds? I have heard no rumors of the marriage of the two technologies and was wondering if such a thing was in the works.

JOHN O. THE INTERNET

We've personally experienced PlayStation tech demos that offer an interface similar to what you outline, but going from concept to retail implementation takes time. Sony's indicated that there's now more cooperation between its electronics and PlayStation divisions, so hopefully we won't have to wait too long.

Reality Check

I just read your "Spellbound" article in issue 62. In the article, you guys talked about the *Wonderbook* and augmented reality. A lot of people once believed that virtual reality would be the future of gaming. However, I think augmented reality has a much better chance. I've personally been sold on the idea after playing some pinball on my PS3. I've been really hooked on the pinball tables from Zen Studios (*Marvel Pinball*, *Zen Pinball*). The plastic figures on the Marvel tables interact with the ball, but at the same time, the game plays like a real pinball table. It makes me think this form of AR could be done on a real pinball machine. Instead of putting on special glasses and entering into a computer world, how about putting special glasses on and playing an actual pinball machine?

JOEL HYDE THE INTERNET

Ask Roger

Q Why is it that EA Sports never puts out their hockey game on portable systems? They never made one for PSP, and now it looks like they're skipping over the Vita this year. After seeing how great *MLB: The Show* turned out on Vita, I see no reason why a hockey game would not rock on Vita. But it seems like it will be another no-show this year.

CHRIS
THE INTERNET

A I'd love to see a *NHL* game on Vita, but there are some very obvious obstacles. Trying to track a tiny black puck on a small screen poses real playabilty problems in a fast-moving sport like hockey. While a baseball isn't much larger than a puck, baseball's structure allows for close-up friendly situations, like the batter/pitcher interface. A handheld hockey game might require something like FoxTrax, which Fox Sports tried in its TV broadcasts, but that wasn't a hit with fans.

We've been impressed with Sony's AR work ever since Invizimals *came out on PSP. The implementation has only gotten better since then on Vita and PS3. While AR can too often be used as a gimmick, we think it's a tech that's just looking for a killer application. While it's not strictly a game,* Wonderbook *might just be it.*

Held Accountable

I bought a game from my PlayStation 3 for my Vita, and frankly I'm pretty mad. I used a different account to purchase the game due to my credit card information already being stored on it. I was really excited to use what I purchased on my Vita. But for some reason, I have to use a different memory card or format the one I have (involving everything being deleted) to use the game I bought. Whose stupid idea was that? We already know only so many accounts can be set on different systems until they must be deactivated. Why not the Vita? It'll cost me to purchase a new memory card and use my previous account or not use the content I bought at all. STUPID!

MASON THE INTERNET

Blame this one on piracy, which totally undermined the incredibly successful PSP's software base. Think how incredibly easy it would be to "share" Vita game downloads if the memory card/account restriction didn't exist. We'd like to see leniency here, but Sony's position is completely understandable.

Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey

"Is it too early to get excited about Peter Jackson's new film? Initially, I was okay with the Mayan calendar ending in 2012, since *The Hobbit* hit about a week prior to doomsday. But now that there's going to be multiple films, I'm sorta pissed."

ROGER BURCHILL

YKS

Your Kickstarter Sucks

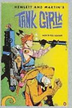
"For every good Kickstarter idea, there are thousands of people trying to fund misguided inventions, half-baked documentaries, and hideous webcomics. Your Kickstarter Sucks [yourkickstartersucks.tumblr.com] finds the most galling examples and ridicules them."

MIKEL REPARAZ

Mourning Glow

"It's rare for a garagey post-punk band to actually sound upbeat, but somewhere under all that fuzz and feedback, Wild Moth's first official 7-inch manages to convey a great deal of hopefulness. Grab the vinyl at asianmanrecords.com!"

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH



Tank Girl

"I've recently been re-reading *Tank Girl* and I totally forgot how much I love its crude, violent, over-the-top humor. It's dirty and definitely not for everyone, though." **ANNE LEWIS**

PSN Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without.

BEST FULL GAMES

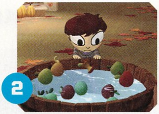
1

A Beautiful Death

Limbo

Limbo may have taken its time coming to PSN, but it was worth the wait. This platformer melds simple controls with supremely challenging gameplay and a beautiful, but chilling, aesthetic. It's the rare game where we die often, but never feel frustrated.

10 Pub **Playdead**
Dev **Playdead**



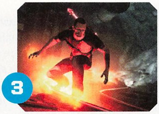
2

Tricks and Treats

Costume Quest

Sure, *Quest* is Halloween-themed, but the adventure itself is timeless. With candy and monster-smiting in equal measure, this sugary RPG is a charming homage to classics like *Final Fantasy*, enhanced by developer Tim Schafer's trademark sense of humor.

9 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**



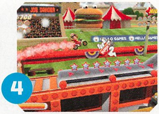
3

Frightening Lightning

inFamous Festival of Blood

This standalone spinoff sees *inFamous* hero Cole MacGrath facing off against vampires. At stake? (groan) Cole's very own soul. It's enough to make vampires fashionably cool again—in spite of *Twilight*.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Sucker Punch**



4

Thrills and Spills

Joe Danger

An enthralling mix of *Excitebike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting wild and dangerous on a motorbike has never been this awesome.

9 Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**

5

Zen Exploration

Flower

This gorgeous concept game turns blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest AAA offerings. Consider it a suitable substitute for a bouquet for your loved one.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**

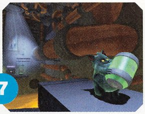
6

Platform Harmony

Sound Shapes

While we're partial to playing this melodious platformer via Vita (and its touch controls), there's no denying that this seemingly simple game charms and mesmerizes us with its blend of puzzle-ish level navigation and music creation. Creating and sharing levels just adds to the symphony.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Queasy Games**



7

Brain Strainer

Quantum Conundrum

The latest mindbender from developer Kim Swift, one of the masterminds behind the iconic *Portal* puzzle franchise, *Conundrum* has us navigate a mysterious mansion by shifting dimensions—each possessing its own unique physics-manipulating property.

9 Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Airtight Games**

8

Has Heart, Wants Brains

The Walking Dead Episode 1–A New Day

Licensed games are usually horrific, and not in the good way. *The Walking Dead* bucks the trend with a riveting episodic adventure marked by an engrossing narrative, life-changing decisions, and heart-pounding showdowns with zombie hordes.

9 Pub **Telltale Games**
Dev **Telltale Games**

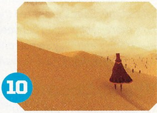
9

Ladies' (Fight) Night

Skullgirls

With the fighting genre in the midst of a resurgence, it's nice to see a new IP join the fray. *Skullgirls* features a cast of eight hand-drawn, superpowered femme fatales in glorious 2D and offers an enticing mix of accessibility and depth. Don't overlook this one.

9 Pub **Konami / Autumn Games**
Dev **Reverge Labs**



10

We Are Not Alone

Journey

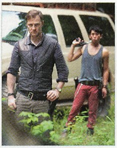
The hauntingly beautiful and atmospheric *Journey* has us wandering a desert to reach a distant mountain. Along the way, we may or may not encounter and wordlessly communicate with fellow travelers who can aid us in our quest. Is this a game or a metaphor for life?

8 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're downloading to our PS3 this month

"The pain doesn't go away. You just make room for it."



The Walking Dead Season 3

ETA **October 15** Rated **TV-14** Genre **Drama/Horror** Studio **AMC**

From one of the most-read ongoing comic book series came one of the most-watched cable TV dramas. Now on its third season, the cast of the *The Walking Dead* faces off against the dead and the living alike. Characters we loved (or hated) from the comics, such as Governor and Michonne, make their first appearance in Season 3 and change the dynamic of the already-damaged group even further. More than just a show about zombies, *The Walking Dead* is about finding a way to survive together after the world falls apart. The undead are merely a factor.

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For a limited time, owners of select Sony devices can get a free 60-day Premium Plan trial to the Music Unlimited service. Listen to millions of songs from favorite artists with no advertising and unlimited skipping. Simply go to your PS3 or PSP XMB's music section and click on Music Unlimited. PS Vita owners should download the Music Unlimited app from the PS store, and enjoy the benefit of listening to tunes while simultaneously playing a game. Once the service is initiated on the PlayStation device, the account can also be accessed via any computer, iOS device, or Android phone or tablet. This offer must be redeemed by December 31, 2012, and full terms can be viewed at MUnlimited.com/60day.

BEST FREE STUFF

Pinball Wizardry

Zen Pinball 2

A heavy-duty dose of fast-paced pinball action awaits PS3 and Vita owner. Bursting with an abundance of ball-whackin' fun across loads of bustling table designs, this free download is the next best thing to having a real machine.

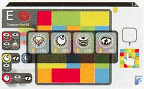
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Zen Studios**

Man on Fire

Max Payne 3 Disorganized Crime Pack

Gunning it out across the all-new Hoboken Rooftops multiplayer map—which includes Max's apartment—is a blast. Arcade Mode extras like incendiary ammo are a plus.

Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar Studios**



Mind Renders

Treasure Park (Vita)

This colorful bite-sized download lets us craft grid-based puzzles full of traps and treasures to challenge friends with. We can also share puzzles with total strangers using Vita's Near feature.

Pub **SCEE**
Dev **SCEE**

Skater Style

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD Theme

Celebrate the *Tony Hawk* franchise's return to its gnarly arcade roots with this PS3 theme tribute to Birdman's glory days. Dig the theme? Then grab the game and get shredding!

Pub **Activision**
Dev **Robomodo**

Line in the Sand

Spec Ops: The Line Co-Op Challenge Mode

Running and gunning with a bud is always more fun, and this quartet of co-op challenge missions for *The Line* offer a great level of variety and locations.

Pub **2K Games**
Dev **Yager Development**

The Apocalypse

Enduring doomsday scenarios, PlayStation-style

Quake City

MotorStorm: Apocalypse

What would you do if the world was about to expire? The correct answer is: steal a 172-inch OLED TV. Or you could enter a racing tournament set in a city being torn apart by earthquakes. Based on San Francisco, The City gives the smashy racing a suitably catastrophic setting, with deforming tracks to keep the action apocalyptic.

The Robot Apocalypse

Enslaved: Odyssey to the West

If every doomsday event was this pretty, we'd gladly go the way of the triceratops and Myspace. Mixing Mad Max's ruined highways with a colorful, jungle-strangled Manhattan, Ninja Theory's end of days is beautiful. It's just a pity the price was mankind being all but obliterated by stabby droids.

Dusty Doomsday

I Am Alive

Cheery like listening to a Sinéad O'Connor CD at a funeral for baby owls, this survival sim presents a dust-covered dystopia. Thanks to a cataclysm known as The Event, a series of earthquakes destroyed everything. Well, apart from our hero, hordes of homicidal hobos, and tons of AAA batteries.

The Accidental End Days

Darksiders

Want some advice for the next time you wake up at armageddon o'clock? When you hear the pitter-patter of flying horses, *run*. Such a sound can only herald the Four Horsemen, including punchy Kratos wannabe War. Tricked into starting the end days early, the beefy demon-basher basically wipes out humanity. Oops.

Highway to Hell

Rage

Just like the fate that awaited all of Denver the Last Dinosaur's friends, *Rage's* civilization was ended by a massive rock. After the asteroid strikes in 2029, only a few pockets of people avoid perishing. When your Ark Survivor awakes, he's in a world of mutants, buggy races, and a hospitable John Goodman-voiced bandit.

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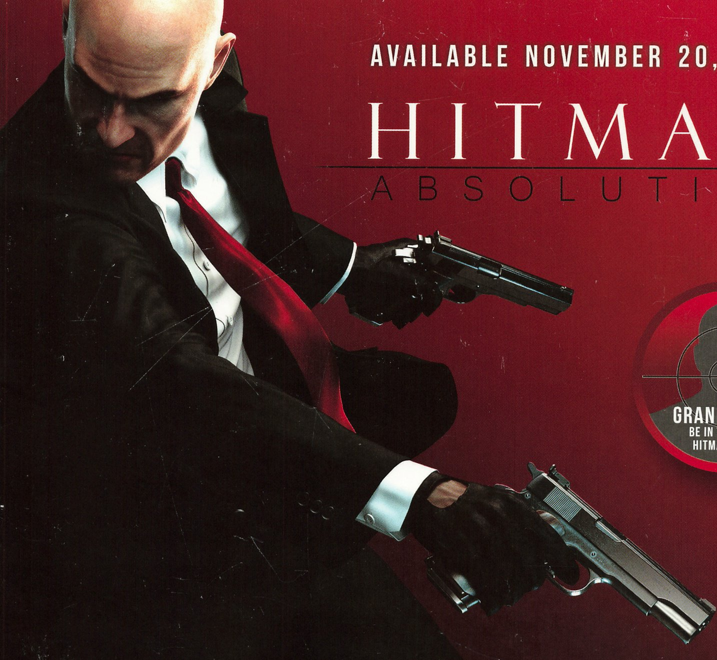

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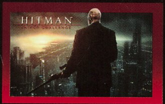

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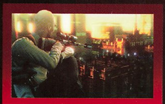

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